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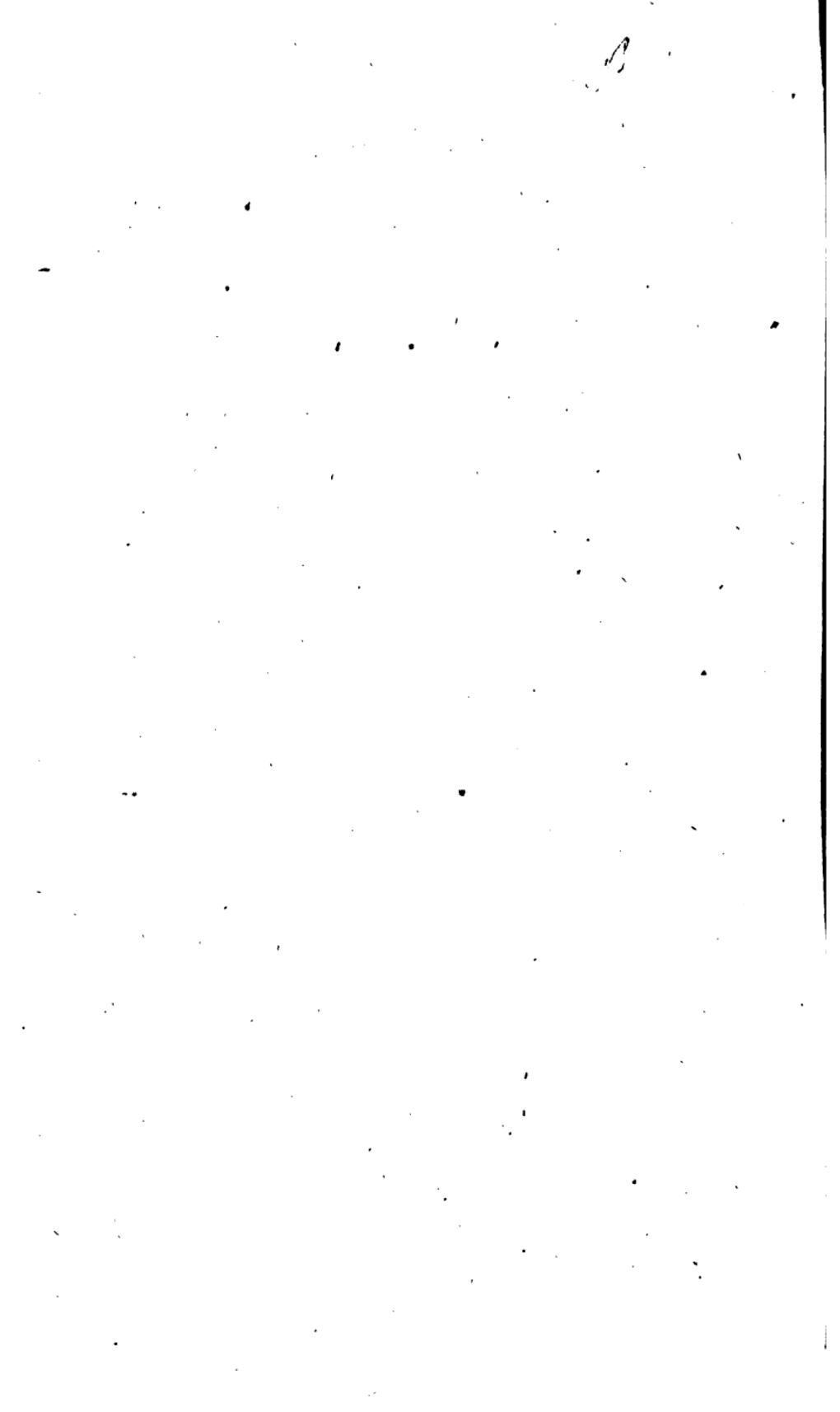
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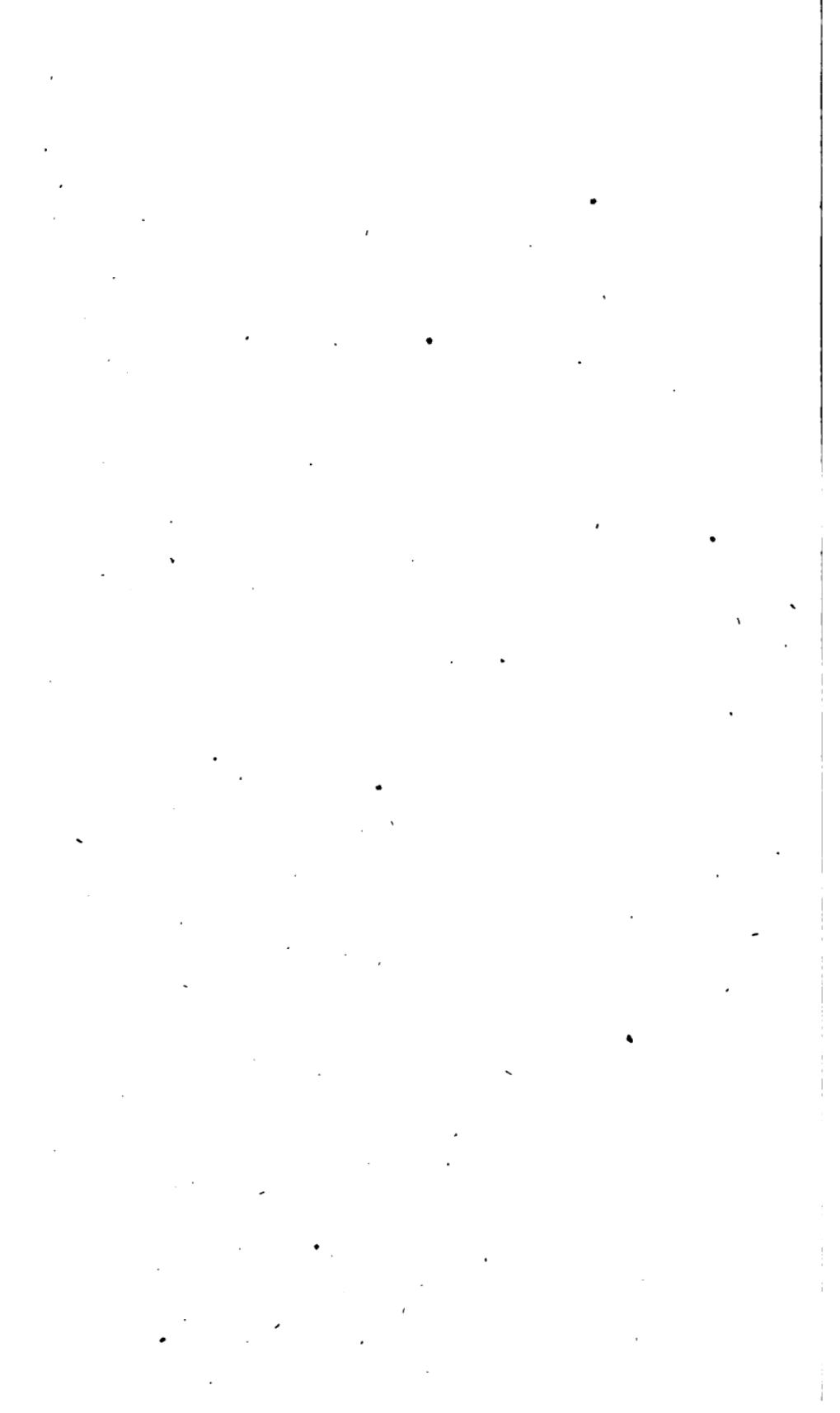


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Miss Brown
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MAIDS OF HONOUR:

A TALE

OF

THE COURT OF GEORGE I.

"One thing I have got by the long time I have been here, which is,
the being more sensible than ever I was of my happiness in being *Maid of
Honour*: I wont say 'God preserve me so,' neither; that would not be
so well."—SUFFOLK CORNISH SPAGHETTI.

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AIRPORTUO

KW
TO

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART.

AUTHOR OF "PELHAM," &c. &c.

OF the fair celebrities who have given a title to these volumes, it cannot be unknown to so well read an historical scholar as yourself, that one—the true heroine of the story—has been immortalized by the praises of Pope, Gay, Churchill, Horace Walpole and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and has also had the honour of being made the subject of a little poem in the English language from the pen of Voltaire. Indeed Mary Lepel was one of those rare characters formed to be the ornament of her circle, and the boast of her age. Nor have her three fair contemporaries, with whom she is here associated, passed through

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their gay career without leaving some such interesting records. The names of Bellenden, Howe, and Meadows are to be found in many a pleasant verse and gossiping memorandum referring to the Court Beauties of the period.

The society in which they were regarded as such agreeable features, though it existed in this country little more than a hundred years ago, undoubtedly was formed of the most extraordinary materials that ever constituted a civilized community. That segment of it styled *the Court*, was such a Court, as I think you will readily agree with me, England never saw before, and is not likely to behold again. Yet in this soil, another strange sign of these very strange times, there flourished qualities the most opposite that can by any possibility be conceived; the courtly Chesterfield and the elegant Addison were existing harmoniously with the brutal Wharton and the licentious Buckingham. Never was the Hyperion and Satyr juxtaposition more conspicuous than in the various contrasts of this kind, that were then and there to be met with.

You will, no doubt, as readily perceive that for the numerous historical personages who help to

fill up my canvass—except now and then in a slight deviation from the exact time, and in the imaginative colouring necessary to all such illustrations—I have had continual reference to published facts and characteristics. Indeed, as respects even the royal group who figure so prominently in the foreground, if they are not such flattering likenesses as are usually found in portraits of royalty, they may be regarded with confidence, as reflecting, according to many able authorities, the features of the very remarkable originals they assume to represent; and as to the eminent literary characters that are introduced, perhaps you may think, with a more evident ambition, it should be observed that they are merely sketched in to complete the general design; in fact, they possess no pretensions beyond back-ground figures.

In dedicating to you the picture I have here delineated of this unique Court, and of the very singular state of society of which the Court circle may be said to have formed the head, I am conscious how unworthy it is to be graced with the name of an artist whose works exhibit so eminent an excellence; but the merit we cannot approach

we may surely be permitted to honour, and therefore I trust this evidence of admiration, trifling as it is likely to be considered, may not be thought by you entirely undeserving your regard.

FRANK RANELAGH.

London, March 24th, 1845.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

MAIDS OF HONOUR.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRIGADIER AND HIS DAUGHTER.

Had I Hanover, Bremen and Verden,
And likewise the Duchy of Zelle,
I'd part with them all for a farden,
To have my dear Molly Lepel.

LORD CHESTERFIELD.

LITTLE more than fourteen years after the commencement of the eighteenth century, England was in a strange unsettled state that appeared to prognosticate a general conflict of its elements at no very remote period. Queen Anne had died, and the Elector of Hanover had succeeded to the throne she left vacant. The people who beheld

with complacency a father driven out of the kingdom, and his place filled successively by two of his daughters, had began to lose both sight
and remembrance of the intolerable offences which had brought about so extraordinary an usurpation.

The indomitable energy and practical commonsense of the cold and formal William of Nassau, and the military successes which illuminated the reign of Queen Anne, reconciled the great body of the nation to the loss of the most insignificant of the weak and worthless Stuarts; but on the crown being transferred to the brow of a foreign potentate, who took no pains to conceal his being a stranger to their language and constitution, who seemed as careless of the feelings of his new subjects as he was indifferent to their sentiments, some people began to consider that James II. had been hardly dealt with; and even had his faults deserved perpetual expatriation, it was thought a great and inexcusable wrong to punish his descendants, who were guiltless of the very slightest share in them.

As it became more generally known that George I. was as deficient in moral as he was in intellectual recommendations, that he outraged

public decency in England by maintaining a harem of Hanoverian mistresses, whose persons were of so dominant an ugliness as to repel the most easily pleased, and that he made it universally evident he cared for the kingdom he had been called to govern, only so far as it could be made profitable to the Electorate he had left, but not abandoned, more general became the reference of his subjects to the exiled family, and more frequently did they dwell upon the accounts that were in circulation, of their merits, their virtues and their misfortunes.

There was soon a considerable party in the country, who in secret were favourably disposed towards the exiles; and nothing but the fear which prevailed of the return of popery kept them from publicly making an effort for the restoration of the Stuarts to their hereditary honours.

Many persons, in England as well as in Scotland, held correspondence with the son of James II., which was of course studiously concealed from the ruling powers; and many were quite as sincere in their good wishes, but were much too prudent to display them. The spies of the government were exceedingly industrious in

reporting every symptom of conspiracy and disaffection ; nevertheless, treasonable pamphlets and scurrilous songs were readily circulated all over the kingdom, and every scandalous report respecting the members of the reigning family found extensive and rapid circulation.

It so happened, that such reports could scarcely fail of possessing a zest for those who chose to listen to them. The King knew very little, and cared to know very little respecting the people he governed. He was in constant variance with his son, whom he seemed to despise and hate equally, and who it was evident returned his ill-feeling with interest. He appeared to have no family ties, and, except one son, no family connexions—at least none that were evident to his English subjects.

The father and son were much alike in some respects, they were both headstrong, weak and dogmatic, licentious without the slightest assumption of refinement or delicacy ; yet brave, and on rather rare occasions liberal. They opposed each other either openly or secretly with great pertinacity, and there were not wanting mischievous friends on both sides, who endeavoured to draw them into more decisive and open enmity. The

gallantries of both were equally notorious and equally offensive ; and if the King of England permitted himself to be governed by old and ugly German harridans, whom he allowed apartments in St. James', the Prince of Wales though possessed of an excellent wife, dishonoured by his attentions as many of his father's fair subjects as he thought proper to distinguish in that way.

But our business is not at present with the Court ; we have better, though humbler game in view, which without further preface, we beg leave to present to the courteous reader.

Brigadier-General Lepel, a brave and accomplished officer, who had honourably distinguished himself in the continental wars of Queen Anne, had on the accession of the Elector of Hanover to the British throne, chosen to live a little retired from the public eye, though certainly not out of the world, in a handsome mansion situated in a picturesque part of the rural village of Petersham. Here, whilst enjoying all that is most refreshing in a country life, from his vicinity to Hampton Court, and near neighbourhood to the capital he had frequent opportunities of bringing around him whatever was most attractive in town society. He had always courted the friendship

of men of letters ; there were indeed few worthy of the honour he had not frequently received at his hospitable table, and the greatest statesmen of the age were among his most familiar acquaintances.

General Lepel was a remarkably vain man ; though old enough to have long cast aside the follies of his youth, he was as thorough a fop as the youngest soldier in his regiment. It was, however, but the harmless coxcombry of age, that displayed itself in an appearance scrupulously neat, in an inordinate fondness for multiplying likenesses of his own dear person, and in a studied effort to surround himself with the most imposing evidences of wealth and station.

The Brigadier's vanity was extremely comprehensive. He was vain of his military rank ; he was vain of his pictures, china, and plate ; he was very vain of his person ; but more than all, was he vain of one fair daughter, whose attractions might have excused a much greater degree of vanity than that with which she was regarded by her doting parent.

Mary Lepel had been deprived of her mother at a very early age. But her father's affection had prevented her understanding the extent of

this usually irreparable loss. Her form and features had almost from infancy been peculiarly prepossessing ; and her disposition was marked by so much winning affectionateness, that she soon came to be as much a favourite with the General's friends as with himself.

She in due time received all the advantages the system of schooling then in vogue could confer upon her ; and at the period to which we have arrived, had returned from a fashionable school ; her impassioned nature brimming over with romance, and her heart and mind impressed with the most generous sentiments of which a romantic school-girl was ever possessed.

Mary Lepel had had but lately completed her fifteenth year ; but the charm of youth was not more evident in her faultless face than was the still greater charm of innate purity of feeling. She was rather under the medium height, with a figure possessed of the most exquisite proportions ; buoyant, graceful, and confiding ; and owning a complexion radiantly fair, every feature marked with a sense of beauty rarely given to the human face in its most perfect form.

She had, as we have said, just left school, where she had been taught all the accomplishments then

considered necessary for a young gentlewoman of family. She could sit up in her chair in the most complete independence of support from the back ; she could carve at table fish, flesh, and fowl, with equal dexterity and elegance. She could dance a minuet with a grace altogether unrivalled ; and ride a horse to the admiration of all the Nimrods of her acquaintance. She was thoroughly conversant with household economy, and had had a careful training in potting and preserving, baking and brewing, clear-starching, and all the fine arts in connexion with the kitchen, the store-room, the dairy, and the toilet. She spoke a little French, could play on the lute and harpsichord, and sing a pastoral ballad ; and had learned as much history, astronomy, geography, and the use of the globes, as she would find no difficulty in forgetting when matters in which she should be more deeply interested came before her attention.

As for needle-work, there were in her chamber certain specimens in black frames that displayed her skill most prominently. One was a pastoral scene in worsted, in which a figure intended to represent a man in a sky-blue spencer and pea-green breeches was made to lean against a tree that might have been mistaken for a cabbage,

holding a long crook in the direction of several nondescript animals, looking very unlike sheep, which were supposed to be kept in their places by the assistance of an indistinguishable black mass near them that did duty for a dog, and might have represented an elephant with equal fidelity.

In each corner of this admirable landscape was a kind of lilliputian spread-eagle, intended to represent a butterfly, and underneath several lines speaking decidedly on the happiness of shepherds in general, and highly laudatory of the morals of this one in particular.

Another specimen of this accomplishment contained two full-length figures, displaying great masses of yellow, crimson, brown, and white, which it was usually asserted the artist considered to be resemblances of King Solomon and Queen Sheba; but which was Solomon and which Sheba the most learned had not ventured to pronounce. Many other examples of the same art were in this chamber, which unnecessarily corroborated the evidence of the extraordinary skill the two just described so fully established.

In her store of useful knowledge we may name at least a dozen washes for the complexion, an incomparable salve for chapped hands, and an un-

rivalled pomatum for the hair. But Mary Lepel had managed to acquire other resources, for which she was very little indebted to her careful teachers. Conspicuous among these was an extraordinary appetite for romance, which, while it made her an indiscriminate reader of all the extravagant fictions of the last age, tinged her whole nature so completely with the exaggerated colouring that distinguishes them, it was scarcely possible to imagine, even amongst the heroines of those very heroic productions, a creature at once so exceedingly beautiful, and so exceedingly romantic. So absorbed had her youthful mind become by these imposing productions, that she was continually referring to the proceedings of those personages who were described as figuring in them most prominently; and a certain “Prince Oroondates” had so captivated her fancy, that she regarded him as her *beau ideal* of a lover, and would not have listened to any one presenting himself as a suitor, had he fallen short of the Prince’s perfections. In this enthusiasm, however, she was not alone; for a French lady of distinction had, under similar impressions, caused her infant to receive at the font this fashionable hero’s name, and the child so distinguished, afterwards be-

came the father of the celebrated Marshal Villars.

But what can be said of a young lady of fifteen, whose ideas had been almost wholly drawn from the interminable narratives of Calprenede and Scudery? And, moreover, what could be expected from one so fair and imaginative, taken from the dull formality of the school-room, cheered only by the false brilliancy of the erroneous speculations and delusive visions, arising from such a course of reading, to be placed at the head of the handsome establishment of Brigadier-General Lepel.

The General, though not famous for much consideration, had considered that, although his daughter might not be deficient in the proper accomplishments suitable for a child of his, for whom he entertained particularly proud notions, a little experience might be of great advantage to her, and he judiciously sought the assistance of one better qualified to bestow it, in his opinion, than any one of his numerous acquaintance, male or female.

A little time after the return of the young lady to the paternal home, the Brigadier was seated by the breakfast table on a heavy cushioned chair

with a broad back, in a flowing dressing-gown of brocaded silk, that left nothing of his garments visible, but two handsome morocco slippers and a small portion of a pair of very fine clocked stockings, that encased his feet as they rested, his legs stretched at full length, on a cushioned footstool before him.

On the table covered with a handsome damask cloth, was a very beautifully chased silver tea equipage and costly china service; and among various plates of viands was a silver-bound inlaid chest opened, displaying a small gold bowl, with tongs of the same precious metal resting upon the lumps of fine sugar with which it was filled, having on each side of it, a silver cannister to contain tea.

The room was capacious and lofty: its floor covered with a Turkey carpet, with a pile thick enough to outlast the wear of many generations; round the walls were portraits, as might be supposed, of the Lepel family; but this was a mistake, though from a family likeness that ran through them all, it was evidently a mistake that might very readily be made.

Prominent among these was the full length of a youth on horseback, wearing a campaign coat,

pistols at his holsters, jack boots, his cocked-hat standing on the top of a very full wig, and his sword drawn. This was Cornet Lepel.

Not very far off, the eye rested upon the same features. This person wore a green silk knit waistcoat—the pockets falling to the hips—ornamented with gold and silver flowers, and almost covered with gold lace; over it was a brown flowered velvet coat with cuffs extending back to the elbow, also richly trimmed with embroidery; his head and shoulders bore a tremendous white periwig; a sword was at his side; the breeches were of the same material as the coat; and below were blue silk stockings with silver clocks, velvet garters, and high shoes with red heels and small silver buckles. The gentleman was in the act of taking a pinch of snuff from a gold box. This was Captain Lepel.

Further on, was the same excellent officer in a different dress, and by the foliage and fountain introduced in the canvas, and by the clouded cane dangling at the wrist, he was supposed to be taking an airing. This was Major Lepel.

Colonel Lepel was represented in another frame leaning on a cannon; and General Lepel sat at a table covered with papers, with a scroll in

one hand, bearing the words, "Member for Old Sarum," he having been returned for that important constituency. In short, the series of portraits were drawn from one original—the owner of Petersham Manor.

Opposite to the Brigadier sat the very youthful and very graceful figure of the young mistress of the mansion, with laced stomacher and a small white muslin apron over a very full morning dress; her hair tied up with ribands and curled at the sides. She occasionally amused herself, whilst sipping from a tea cup and saucer she held in one hand, by playing with the long ears of a pet spaniel that rested at her feet.

The Brigadier turned with complacency from the reflection of his costly dressing gown in the mirror before him to his various representatives on the walls. His eye travelled from one to another with increasing satisfaction, till they dwelt on that of the glittering, handsome captain; and as he remembered his celebrity as Beau Lepel, of the Court of William and Mary, he could not help contrasting with many regrets, the personal appearance of the Brigadier with that of his junior in command; and thought it would be highly desirable, if rank could be purchased

without wrinkles, and fortune procured devoid of crows'-feet, failing eye-sight, deficient hearing, and shrunken limbs.

The General put down “the Post-Boy,” whence he had been gleaning the latest news, and sighed for the golden days that never could return; but in making this movement his eyes fell upon the animated features of his beautiful daughter, and their happy sunshine dispersed in a moment the gloom that had fallen on his spirits. His self-love drew an inexhaustible fund of consolation from that faultless form and countenance. How admirably were they formed to shine at Court! what a sensation they would cause amongst the brilliant circle at St. James’! What importance, what consideration, what preferment might he not look for, when his matchless daughter was acknowledged the chief attraction in the royal palaces!

He called to mind his early courtier days—for he was still a courtier—how readily by a prepossessing appearance and devoted manner he had obtained the favour of two female sovereigns, and bowed, and smiled, and flattered his way to patronage and distinction; became the idol of all the women, and the envy of all the men. He remem-

bered how easily he had obtained place and honour, with little talent beyond the talent to please, and no great virtue except that of restraining from any vice which chanced to be out of fashion. Surely, he thought, the career would be no less easy, and might be much more brilliant, of a Court favourite of the other sex.

To do him justice, he did not anticipate for his innocent and beauteous daughter the employment of any of the very questionable means of advancement, he had himself found it necessary to use ; he would have recoiled from submitting her to so terrible an ordeal, had he imagined such essential to the fulfilment of his views. But his ambition appeared to have thrust his experience aside, and clothed his dreams of greatness with a splendour that allowed of neither blot nor flaw.

He did not for a moment consider the danger of abandoning a young and pure-minded woman of rare personal attractions, to the blandishments of a thoughtless and licentious circle. He who presided over it, King George I., was a character with whom delicacy and refinement were entirely unknown ; and his son the Prince of Wales, was allowed the merit of exceeding his

august parent in the coarseness and vulgarity of his disposition.

Neither of these princes excited in General Lepel any misgivings or fears respecting the welfare of the lovely being he wished to place near them; as the affections of the first were known to be monopolized by the ugliest mistress in his dominions, and the other was married to a beautiful and talented princess who gave him no cause for seeking gratification beyond the sphere of her influence.

Dishonourable intimacies he did not fear, indeed he did not think of them, his mind was too much engrossed with proud and happy visions, in which an alliance with some powerful prince or wealthy duke at the least, formed always a principal feature, to find entrance for anything discreditable or humiliating.

The Brigadier had already considered the line of operation necessary to the complete realization of his wishes. He would open his house to the visits of the most distinguished members of that select coterie so admired and honoured under the title of "the Court." He would do more, he would entertain at his table the most celebrated members of the world of letters, the rising wits,

the famous scholars, the most admired poets, and the ablest writers in different branches of literature. His daughter would be the admired of all, the general toast of the town, the theme of every pen, and the subject of every tongue ; till the royal attention was sufficiently excited and the necessary influence exercised, to cause her sphere of action to become the exalted one, her ambitious father desired.

As he developed this plan in his mind, the General resolved to take the advice of a friend, who though belonging to that much abused class, "old women," was well entitled to be considered a counsellor in all matters relating to court patronage, such as the whole world could not produce.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT DUCHESS.

That face, that form, that dignity, that ease,
Those powers of pleasing, with that will to please,
By which Lepel, when in her youthful days,
Even from the curriſh Pope extorted praise.

CHURCHILL.

THE Brigadier had taken snuff from a superb box, as he always did when engaged, or wishing to be thought engaged in deep reflection, and had wiped very carefully, with a cambric handkerchief the stray particles of the dust from his upper lip, which was generally a sure sign that he had finished his thoughts and was about to give them utterance.

“Madam Lepel,” said he with the deliberation of one who considers well before he speaks. The young lady left off balancing her spoon on the edge of her tea-cup, a performance she had assi-

duously been engaged upon during the last ten minutes, and placed herself in the most orthodox attitude of attention and respect, taught at the fashionable school of Penelope Stiffandstern of Minerva House, Newington Butts, where she had obtained her education.

“Madam Lepel,” repeated the General, “I have thought it necessary, and I have no reason to doubt it will be mightily to your advantage, that you should cease to attend the course of instruction considered essential to young ladies of high connexions.”

The Brigadier paused; but if he expected any remark from his daughter, he must have been greatly disappointed; for she had been too completely a pupil of the peerless Penelope Stiffandstern, to change the upright attitude and attentive gaze with which she had been taught to receive communications from superiors, teachers, parents, and guardians.

The Brigadier pursued the thread of his discourse with exactly the same stateliness and verbosity he was wont, in his place in Parliament, to address the speaker when representing the enlightened and respectable constituency of Old Sarum.

"You will find yourself in a new sphere, and to accommodate yourself to it entirely, you will be so good as to divest yourself of all those thoughts, feelings, and pursuits which though mighty proper as a school-girl at Minerva House, would be monstrous out of place, and prodigious unbecoming in the heiress of Brigadier-General Lepel doing the honours of Petersham Manor."

Again the Brigadier paused, and Miss Lepel continued to sit with her hands on her lap, her chest thrown forwards, and her shoulders at a due distance from the back of the chair on which she sat.

"I intend to entertain," added he, "the very best company that can be attracted to my house : people of the highest distinction—alike celebrated as persons of family, of rank, and of good breeding. I intend you to sit at the head of my table ; and expect that you will consider yourself as the mistress of my house, to whom both my guests and my servants are bound to shew the most marked respect."

This pause received no more interruption than the others ; notwithstanding it was a somewhat startling announcement to the very young creature to whom it was addressed.

"As I am infinitely anxious," continued the

Brigadier, "that under these circumstances you should conduct yourself in a manner becoming your birth and breeding, I have endeavoured to obtain for you the advice and countenance of a lady of quality, whose familiarity with the very best company cannot be surpassed by any one. I trust that I shall have no reason to complain of your inattention to my wishes. I hope that you will at all times cheerfully and carefully endeavour to fulfil them."

As the General took out his snuff-box to replenish his nostrils, it was a sign that he had completed his speech; and as this movement assured his daughter he had ceased to address her and waited her reply, she knew she might now venture to speak.

"I am sensible, honoured Sir, of your very great kindness," she replied, preserving her attitude as though she had been cast in the material of the figures in toy-shops, "and shall be but too happy to shew my urgent desire to give you pleasure."

Mistress Penelope Stiffandstern herself could not have received such a communication with more respect, or replied to it with more propriety. Perhaps the General thought so. He

seemed to dwell on the words he had heard, perfectly satisfied that they contained just as much affection as ought to proceed from a dutiful daughter, and just as little familiarity as should be found in the language addressed by such a daughter to a Brigadier-General. But whatever his sentiments may have been, he had no time just now to entertain them, as a loud summons at the house-bell announced visitors; and scarcely had he taken a full survey of himself in the mirror, when a servant in livery threw open the door of the breakfast-room, and announced in a loud voice—

“The Duchess of Marlborough!”

“Madam Lepel,” observed the General in his stateliest manner, as he rose from his seat, “you will be so good as to meet the Duchess in the amber-room, and prepare to find in her Grace the lady of quality whose countenance and advice I promised you a few minutes since. I will do myself the honour to join you as soon as I have completed my morning toilet.”

The well-schooled young lady had quitted her seat directly it became evident to her quick apprehension it was proper for her so to do, and dropping to her father a respectful, but very

graceful curtsey, moved out of one door as the General took his departure by another.

She crossed the hall not without considerable awe at having before her an interview with a person of such celebrity as her father's visitor, and directed her steps towards the apartment to which her Grace had been ushered, with some unpleasant misgivings she should fail in securing her promised good offices; nevertheless she laid her little hand on the handle of the door with the fullest determination of recommending herself to the dreaded Duchess as much as the knowledge she had acquired at Minerva House would allow.

Acting on this resolution it was impossible for the most perfect of the inmates of that fashionable seat of learning, to have acquitted herself in the valuable art of entering a room with more studied propriety of demeanour, than was exhibited by the youthful Mary Lepel, as she ventured into the presence of the stern and stately Duchess of Marlborough.

Alas! for the ardent aspirant for her Grace's patronage, the attention with which she fulfilled the ceremony just mentioned, prevented her from discovering, till too late, that it had been entirely

thrown away :—her father's visitor having placed herself at the end of that long and handsomely decorated apartment, where she was intently examining some enamels. Pictures of battles were round the walls—battles which had been no less glorious to Marlborough than to England ; but the attraction they had for their owner was less, infinitely less drawn from the great triumphs they delineated, than from each possessing a figure of an officer signalising himself in an extremely heroic fashion :—that of course represented the owner of Petersham Manor.

Mary Lepel, as she stood at the door somewhat irresolute and disconcerted at the complete failure of her irreproachable entrance, was enabled to observe the figure of an old lady in a sacque, seated in a fauteuil, bending over the miniature of a very handsome young man. It was the General once more ; but it was the General at a period when he first attracted the attention of the Duchess ; and those much admired features awakened in her Grace a whole flood of recollections that had lain dormant long enough to have been forgotten.

The intimacy which had existed between the young officer and his influential friend did not

escape comment; but if he had excited any tender emotions in her breast, she was but one among the legion whose susceptible natures had felt the influence of his delicate attentions.

The Brigadier's daughter found herself placed in a situation where the numerous lessons in good breeding she had received from the careful Penelope Stiffandstern did not afford her the slightest hint by which she might profit. None knew better how to enter a room; few could leave one with so graceful a ceremoniousness: she could pay her respects and offer her adieu, after the most approved mode known to the polite world. These observances formed an important feature in her daily instruction at Minerva House; but however she might profit by them, it became unpleasantly evident to her that they could not, in the slightest degree, help her in her present rather embarrassing position.

Left entirely to her own resources, she could think only of endeavouring to attract the Duchess's notice. With that view she ventured upon a cough—at first very slight and short, but gradually increasing in length and sharpness. She advanced further into the room at every fresh experiment, feeling every minute more awkward and ill at ease.

Poor girl ! she would have spared her lungs had she known that their exercise was bestowed upon a person as deaf as a post. Her only hope seemed in the chance she had of attracting the Duchess's attention, and she continued to advance nearer and nearer in the belief that the moment her father's visitor moved her eyes from the enamel, she must come under her observation.

Alas ! for any consolation coming from such belief ;—the poor lady could not see, with any accuracy, an inch beyond her nose. Probably Miss Lepel might very soon have given up her hope of introducing herself to so important a personage ; but at that moment a heavy sigh was breathed by the old lady as she replaced the miniature, and her reminiscences of power and worship appeared to be brought to a conclusion.

“ What are you doing there ! ” was the startling intimation given to the young heiress that she had been observed, expressed in a very abrupt manner, and with a very sharp voice.

Mary Lepel did not feel less embarrassed for being addressed so rudely ; and the searching restless eyes that met her own, the dark frown, the dissatisfied yet haughty expression that appeared in the severe scrutiny she seemed to be

experiencing, made her exceedingly uncomfortable.

“What are you doing there, I say!” continued the harsh voice. “Come forward, and tell me who you are, and what you want.”

Mary Lepel made her most perfect curtsey; but she was much too frightened of her companion to be eager to get into a closer neighbourhood. She scarcely advanced a step.

“D’ye hear!” shouted the Duchess in a tone that literally made her start. “Don’t stick there, like a fool. What are you doing?—what brought you here? Say your errand, and go about your business.”

“Please your Grace—” murmured the terrified girl.

“Speak out!” interrupted the other in a voice of thunder.

“Please your Grace,” repeated the young lady, a very little elevating her tones, “please your Grace—”

“What can the creature be mumbling about?” growled the old lady. “Come here, if you want to be heard. Closer!—Closer yet!—A little nearer.—And now, who are you? and what d’ye want?”

The young heiress had got near enough to her dreaded visitor to be in some degree within the scope of her observation, which seemed to be every minute getting more close and severe.

"Please your Grace I—that is to say, my father—"

"Oh, you are the Brigadier's daughter are you?" rudely, and somewhat fiercely cried her Grace of Marlborough, as she continued her scrutiny. "I don't think much of your breeding. You are as awkward as if you had been brought up in a dog-kennel. What have you been doing with yourself? Where have you been taught?"

Poor Mary Lepel! Often had she heard her father dilate on the immense authority of his valued friend the *great* Duchess of Marlborough—as he always styled her in honour of her illustrious husband—in all matters in the slightest degree relating to personal appearance, which she derived from her long residence at Court, where so extraordinary was her influence, she was far more queenly than the Sovereign; and the young lady had been taught to regard her favour as equivalent to success, and to look upon her censure as the most certain sign of her prospects

in life being completely desperate. She had relied upon propitiating this important personage with a display of that gentility she had acquired to such perfection at Minerva House ; but when she heard how rudely her deficiency in good manners was insisted on, she felt ready to sink into the earth for very shame and mortification.

But the trials of the young heiress had scarcely commenced. The Duchess, still continuing her rough and abrupt address, presently began to catechise her as to what she had been taught, and treated the information she received with superlative contempt ; taking care to make this known by a few sharp ejaculations, the tenour of which it was impossible to doubt.

She then commenced an examination into the nature and extent of such accomplishments, by making the terrified girl display her proficiency before her. Her Grace commanded her to dance a minuet ;—a command the poor girl found it almost as impossible to fulfil as to evade. She began the figure ; her companion humming the air and beating the time with more precision than harmony. Her performance of this dance had received the cordial applause of the ever very difficult to please Penelope Stiffandstern ; but

Mary Lepel was now before a much more formidable judge, whose previous harsh bearing, repeated violent exclamations of disapproval, and directions to alter this and the other as she proceeded, so confused her, she felt powerfully convinced the youngest of her school-fellows would have acquitted herself better. When the Duchess finished her most unmusical accompaniment, she therefore was not greatly surprised at being told that she danced like a Polar bear.

The young lady was next desired to sing. If she had felt disqualified for all graceful exertion of her limbs, she was a thousand times more unfit for any melodious exercise of her voice. Nevertheless the mandate had gone forth, and sing she must. She could have cried with a vast deal more ease. Her lute was in the room, she took it up mechanically, and as directed, placed herself opposite her severe examiner.

Often had she won the warmest praise of excellent judges, by her singing; and one song particularly never failed of securing for her universal admiration. But now, scarcely able to breathe, hardly conscious of where she was, or what she was about, she despaired of producing the smallest degree of commendation from her present audience.

However, there was no alternative : the dreaded Duchess, with a visage that seemed to grow darker every moment with pride and *hauteur* was unpleasantly near her ; and with the look of a martyr being consumed at the stake, and the voice of one whose sense of speech is rapidly disappearing, the trembling, sinking, palpitating Mary Lepel, commenced the following

CANZONET.

How happy with my silly sheep
I passed the live-long day,
With nothing but my crook to keep
The hungry wolf away.
I would have learned the danger near
To view with fear and loathing,
Had not the wolf I'd cause to fear
Approached me in sheep's cloathing.

Oh ne'er did I my charge neglect
Since Damon first drew near,
And spoke in fondest phrase unchecked,
And piped so sweet and clear.
Ah ! sillier than the silly sheep
That wolves to slay endeavour ;
Although the flock from harm I keep,
The shepherd's lost for ever !

Mary Lepel sung certainly, but it was much nearer like crying than singing : a sort of indis-

tinct murmur mixed with a stifled sobbing, and not altogether without tears—for she was hurt by the unceremonious treatment she had received. She laboured through the song with an overcharged heart, wishing at every bar of the melody she could find some means of bringing it to a speedy end. Her auditor stared at her during the performance with so contemptuous an indifference as greatly to increase her confusion and distress. At the conclusion there was a brief silence, which the Duchess at last broke.

“Child,” said she, very coldly, “your voice is like a bee in a bottle.”

This unpleasant examination was brought to a conclusion, by the opening of the folding doors of the apartment and the announcement by a footman of “Brigadier General Lepel!” He immediately made his appearance, with a profound reverence, in a brown-flowered velvet coat, richly trimmed, and further set off by a pair of very handsome ruffles; his cocked hat under his arm, and his sword knot dangling beside his velvet breeches.

He advanced, every handsome feature giving indication of extreme suavity, devotion and satisfaction, and bowing easily and gracefully as he

approached with all the air of an old courtier, and all the elegance of an old beau.

His unhappy daughter felt a great relief on his appearance. It was a welcome release from the most disagreeable situation she had ever been placed in. Now she thought the great Duchess would unbend, and to her father and herself converse in a pleasant familiar manner on the footing of old friends; but here again she was sadly out in her reckoning. To her surprise, the General, instead of taking her by the hand as she was expecting, to present her to his powerful friend, passed her by, without bestowing upon her the slightest notice.

Her Grace of Marlborough would hardly have raised herself from her seat at the entrance of an emperor, therefore it is not singular she accorded to the Brigadier General nothing more than a slight bend as he approached. She recognised him by his title, and soon commenced a conversation of which she took upon herself the lion's share, as became a lion of her pretensions; and as though the more completely to prove herself worthy of that character, her portion of the dialogue was composed of a succession of magnificent growls at every thing and every body con-

nected with the Court of England. Now and then, glancing off into notices of the great Duke, her husband, for the purpose of drawing comparisons, by which some distinguished statesman or general was made to sink into contempt.

All this time the beautiful Mary Lepel stood a little apart from the two seniors, fully convinced that when they had done with the important matters on which they were conversing, she should be called into notice ; but to her extreme astonishment on went the Duchess, demolishing kings, princes, commanders, ministers of state, senators, ambassadors, lawyers, poets and divines, as though they were so many rotten sticks put up but to be knocked to pieces by her rhetoric.

The Brigadier was the mirror of courtesy all this time ; although he heard many of his most esteemed associates borne down by a torrent of vituperation—men of whose notice he had been in the habit of boasting as of a personal honour peculiarly agreeable to his vanity—he stood before their defamer, smiling and assenting as graciously, as if she was prodigiously recommending herself to his good will by her exertions against his best friends.

Suddenly as if satisfied with the extent of her

operations in this way, the Duchess rose from her seat and walked towards the door. The Brigadier placed himself at her side, and continued, as if in respectful attendance upon her, listening and bowing apparently with immense satisfaction.

His daughter felt as if she could die of vexation, as she observed the great Duchess on whose patronage she had so strongly relied, sailing out at the door, which would hardly allow her free passage, so prodigious was her hoop, without bestowing upon her either a word or a glance. As soon as they had disappeared, she hurried to her own chamber, where she gave full vent to her tears, heartily wishing herself again under the austere rule of Penelope Stiffandstern; and the only consolation she could find from such extraordinary humiliation as she had just been made to experience, was derived from the knowledge, that there was no heroine in "*Le grand Cyrus*" who could by any possibility have endured so cruel a disappointment.

Had, however, the young heiress accompanied her father and his important friend out of the reception room, it is likely she might have derived consolation from another source: for as they

were approaching the Duchess' sedan, by which the bearers stood ready to receive her, and the General's lacqueys to attend her exit from their master's house, the Brigadier said in a distinct voice: "What does your Grace think of her?"

"There is much for her to learn," replied the Duchess, in a similar tone. "She is very young, Brigadier, very young, and certainly very good looking; in the latter respect she is a true Lepel."

The Brigadier bowed his best bow, and paid one of his most irresistible compliments.

"As I am now living so very near you," added her Grace, condescendingly, "I may perhaps find an opportunity of calling here occasionally to give Madam Lepel a few hints, which may be valuable to her. With these, I have no doubt in a short time she will be able to make such a figure at Court as must satisfy her best friends."

The Brigadier handed the Duchess into her sedan with an appearance of gallantry, never exceeded in his most brilliant days. The chairmen took up their burthen, the lacqueys drew back the doors as wide as possible, with a most respectful alacrity, the iron gates were thrown open

with the same attention, and the great Duchess of Marlborough, almost for the first time in her life, left behind her at least one heart comparatively happy.

CHAPTER III.

HIGH LIFE BELOW STAIRS.

From hence it arises, that they are but in a lower degree what their masters themselves are; and usually affect an imitation of their manners: and you have in liveries beaux, fops, and coxcombs, in as high perfection as among people that keep equipages.

THE SPECTATOR.

THIS is an age of inventions: all sorts of wonderful machines are continually being produced to create all sorts of wonderful effects. There seems to be no bounds to the experiments of the projector. The ancient mechanic modestly said, if a place could be found in which to fix his machinery, he would move the world; but the Archimedes of our times dispense with *ifs*, and are ready to move Heaven and earth every day of their lives to gain a respectable subsistence.

The famous mill that ground old people young,

must assuredly be set down as something more than a nursery fiction, if we notice the numerous metamorphoses of old beaux and antique dowagers into youthful gentlemen and juvenile ladies, that present themselves to our notice in the gay world around us.

Some machine no less miraculous must be in existence, that changes great sinners into greater saints, and sprouting Whigs into full-blown Tories; but despite of the seemingly endless variety of marvellous inventions, we are left without many very necessary machines, which it is surprising have never been thought of. What would be given for some patent apparatus to transform the intractable shrew into the affectionate helpmate; the notoriously overreaching knave into the man distinguished for a nice sense of honour; the unsuccessful author into the amiable critic; the defeated minister into a liberal and considerate leader of the opposition; some new convert into a tolerant observer of the abandoned faith; or some faded beauty into an honest admirer of a youthful rival.

But in spite of the miracles of machinery, these are results that we are afraid are beyond the reach of the mechanical arts. Other changes, however,

no less marvellous, are frequently brought before us, and of these the most wonderful is the transformation by which the simple girl is changed into the knowing woman. Of all the phenomena to be found in this strange world, nothing is so singular ; you see the modest, blushing, quiet, dependant maid, suddenly change to the steady, self-possessed, dignified, governing woman. The reefer who climbs aloft in his storm-tossed bark, must wait almost an honest man's life-time and suffer many a sea-change, before he can attain an admiral's rank and influence ; but a girl starting at the same age into the perils and troubles of her career, glides at once and imperceptibly into a woman's highest responsibilities.

It seemed thus with our heroine. The daughter of the Brigadier took up her important position as directress of the household at Petersham Manor, apparently as completely at home in all its duties, as though she had been its mistress some twenty years. The domestics, from Rack-straw, the white-headed butler, to the young woolly-pated negro page, Pompey, seemed never to tire of expressing their astonishment and admiration at her extraordinary familiarity with the most minute matters connected with household

economy. The directions she gave them exhibited a knowledge of below-stairs' duties, that made one and all satisfied that they had got a sovereign, who knew what she was about and what they were about too. They soon saw that peculation was dangerous, and waste not to be allowed, and became unusually attentive in their worship of the domestic deities, cleanliness, order, and sobriety. Even the despot of the kitchen, Mrs. Molly, neglected usquebaugh and a too frequent abuse of the powers of speech, when listening to the commands of the fair young girl who was now, in domestic affairs, the acknowledged head of the family.

But the opinions of the lower house may best be gathered from the whole body corporate in full conclave assembled, one summer's evening in a long narrow chamber, called the servants' hall where they were wont after supper, to discuss the merits and demerits of their betters, with whatever eatables and drinkables belonging to them, they could get access to. A large brass lamp swung by an iron chain from the ceiling, over a long deal table, threw a lurid light upon the heads of the group below, who differed as much in their positions as in their dispositions.

At the head of the table was always conspicuous the white head, displaying its peculiar cauliflower luxuriance, and almost endless curls, of the sedate and sententious Rackstraw, the highly respectable butler of the Brigadier. He was a smooth-faced, clear-complexioned man with a few well marked wrinkles on the forehead and about the mouth. Whether these marked the play of the muscles in thinking, laughing, or eating we have not been able to ascertain. We know only that he thought a little, he laughed much, and he ate more.

His reflections were, of course, such as became a person of his importance in the family; but it is at least doubtful they were of such weight as would leave a sensible impression on himself, or any body else. Consequently they scarcely serve to account for the wrinkles.

Rackstraw may very possibly have laughed his face into a complete map of lines; for be it known, before his betters he ever wore that becoming gravity that the proverb allows to judges, and to judges only. He knew his place better even than to smile, notwithstanding he had been frequently present when amongst his master's guests, jokes flew about that might have raised a cachinnation

from the driest mummy in Surgeon's Hall. And this rigidity of muscle was with no slight difficulty broken through, when he sought to be jocular amongst his fellow servants at Petersham Manor; the force then employed no doubt caused some marks, like that of the tide on the sands, from the frequency and liberality with which he then and there expended his jocularity.

At the moment we are drawing his portrait, the butler sat back in his capacious arm-chair away from the table, his portly figure well displayed, notwithstanding, so much of it was concealed under the flaps of the ample waistcoat, that almost covered his entire body. But though evidently a little inclined to run to stomach, his stretched out legs crossed at the instep, the feet cased in silver-buckled shoes, shewed that he possessed well knit limbs, and a frame that had lost little of its original strength and symmetry.

Rackstraw's whole attention appeared absorbed in smoking a long clay pipe, from which a cloud of vapour hovered around his head, till it drew off through an open window a little way behind him, that looked out into the stable yard; but though the Virginian weed doubtless obtained his best consideration, it did not prevent his listening

to a singularly bull-necked, bullet-headed, broad-backed old fellow, with a rubicund spongy nose, adorned at the base with a most picturesque-looking mole, that heightened the effect of his broad blooming countenance exceedingly.

He too wore a coat, with tremendous cuffs, of the Lepel livery, and saucepan lid like buttons bearing the Lepel crest, and smoked a long pipe ; but he was distinguished from his fellow servant by wearing a huge powdered periwig with stiff curls all round, that as it happened to be worn very much on one side for the greater convenience of occasionally scratching the bald pate underneath, added greatly to the singularity of his appearance. This was John, the Brigadier's coachman.

Not far from this pair of important officials, appeared an immense face of a red hot hue, resembling in its intensity of colour the brick floor of the chamber. To speculate from its odd cap negligently put on, it was that of a woman ; a guess which a glance at the owner's vast extent of neck, and abundance of feminine drapery clearly established. But what woman before or since ever possessed such a face, as presented itself above the broadbacked chair in which she reposed herself

after the fatigues of the day? It may be said, with perfect truth, that she reposed herself, for she was enjoying the indulgence of that sort of dog sleep, which persons of her habits are wont to fall into, often with more convenience to themselves than to others.

In her present position, Mrs. Molly would have formed an admirable subject for a Dutch painter. Her eyes were closed and her mouth open—the latter disclosing a thoroughfare of rather awful dimensions. Her head having no support kept falling back, till its weight became disagreeable, when it was thrown up with a spasmodic jerk, that acted also upon the extended jaws, bringing them together with a snap that would make the sleeper open her drowsy eyes, stare bewilderedly for a moment, and then close them till a jerk more violent than the last again roused her.

Mrs. Molly reclined with folded arms, that looked like the folds of some huge reptile coiled around her ample person, of the same hue as her face, and shining like one of her own stew pans, to which her skin bore a marked resemblance at all times. Her attitude shewed her independent spirit; and either this was so well known, or her

sleep was so customary a matter, that no one present attempted to disturb her or even to risk a comment on her position.

But the cook at Petersham Manor was a personage not to be disturbed with impunity ; she was a despot in her domain, such as even the powerful Rackstraw did not choose to offend, and the minor domestics dared as soon beard a lion as attempt. So Mrs. Molly, when she had made herself comfortable with a social glass with her fellow servants, after the termination of the day's work, was invariably allowed to indulge in a nap, broken only by those powerful jerks of the muscles of her neck, aforesaid.

Opposite to her were the two young housemaids, Mrs. Lucy and Mrs. Kitty, with gay, good-humoured faces, and neat cotton gowns ; each wearing an aspect of much mystery, mingled with a little apprehension, for they were quietly engaged in telling their own fortunes, by means of a pack of cards spread out on the table before them.

Lower down the table, at the further end, sat Pompey on a tall stool, playing at draughts with a lean, long-visaged, spindle-shanked man, with a mop of what looked like burnt tow on his

head ;—but which out of doubt was his natural hair. He had on a green-sleeved waistcoat, with a green baize apron, nearly hiding a pair of bright, new, leather breeches, tied at the knee with numerous strings, which with speckled stockings and buckled shoes, completed his costume. He was Sandie, the Brigadier's gardener. It was no difficult matter to guess who was winning ; for the little negro was grinning at a rate that made every one of his white teeth visible, whilst the high-dried physiognomy of the Scottish gardener, bore an expression both troubled and puzzled.

On the table were various mugs and jugs, a candle burning in a brass candlestick, and a small jar containing tobacco for the use of the smokers ; and on the walls of the room were two or three unglazed, rudely coloured prints of the battles of the Duke of Marlborough, scarcely to be made out from the united effects of smoke and dirt.

There was a conversation going on between Rackstraw and John Coachman : the subject of which was—their new mistress. John had begun to wax very emphatic in his praises. He thought himself entitled to know something about young Madams of quality, having been in the service

of many of the highest families from the time he was a stable-boy, up to that glorious period of his existence when he ascended the coach-box of the carriage of the Hero of Blenheim :—an epoch in his life which he regarded with such interest, that he always took great care to have about him some memorials of the event; of which the coloured prints on the walls, and the brass head of the Duke in the form of a tobacco-stopper he carried in his pocket, were the principal.

If John Coachman had a fault, it was an inclination to be confidential over his pipe ;—not that a confidence that begins in smoke, in which of course it has a natural tendency to end, is particularly dangerous under ordinary circumstances; but John's confidences were not always discreet. He possessed the ordinary failing of ordinary servants—a taste for slandering their betters. In some cases this proceeds from mere vulgar malevolence ; but the Brigadier's coachman, whenever he did anything not particularly creditable to his numerous masters and mistresses, did so from habit, rather than from malice. We don't know whether, like the lower House of Parliament in times gone by, before proceeding to business, he craved liberty of speech on his enter-

ing service, we only know he used it, and that sometimes with a freedom which would not have been quite agreeable to some of the persons spoken of.

Nothing of the kind could ever be attributed to his fellow-smoker, or he never would have obtained his confidential position in the establishment of so particular a master as Brigadier-General Lepel. The sagacious Rackstraw made no confidants. He followed, as far as was possible, an admirable maxim, which in golden letters ought to be fixed in some conspicuous place in all domestic establishments: "Hear, see, and say nothing." In the course of his career he had heard a good deal, he had seen a good deal, and concerning what he had heard and seen, he had exercised a most praiseworthy discretion.

Nevertheless, however averse to making confidants, he was far from being opposed to receiving confidential communications from others. Indeed it appeared as though he experienced considerable gratification in obtaining from his less guarded associates, every little matter of secret intelligence it was in their power to supply. In his social relaxations with a communicative friend in livery, he sat very much at his ease, smoking and drinking, listening attentively, laughing when

required, and sometimes putting in an exclamation of surprise or encouragement; but when his friend had come to the end of his revelations, and expected as a matter of justice, his attentive listener would be equally communicative, he found him as dry as a tinder-box.

“Ah!” said John Coachman, pathetically, as he knocked the ashes out of his exhausted pipe, to replenish the bowl, “it’s much to be hoped our master’s daughter aint a-going to Court.”

“Why not, John?” inquired the Butler.

“Why not?” repeated the other, sharply. “Because it’s a shame and a disgrace for a young innocent creature like such as our sweet young Madam Lepel to be seen at such a place. I remember the time, when good Queen Anne was alive, when quality-folks showed a proper respect for their own reputations, and were sure of having good servants to wait on them; but now there aint one in ten of tip-top masters and missises, as any honest servant as knows the value of his character, would demean himself by looking after.”

“Bless me! I did not think things were so changed,” exclaimed Rackstraw.

“Lord love you, Mister Butler, no change

could have been for the worser. When I was second coachman of the great Duke's, both at Marlborough House and at Blenheim, I had opportunities of seeing what was going on in the great world, such as fall to the lot of few, even in my honourable and useful situation. Places *was* places then. And though the Duke was uncommon particular, and the Duchess an uncommon deal more so, there was at least the comfort of knowing we lived in decent society. But Queen Anne dies, and the Elector of Hanover comes over from foreign parts to take the reins. The Duke and the new government didn't hit their osse well together at all; and as they seemed desperately inclined to drive over him, I took it into my head to look out for another service."

The butler puffed away with a placid countenance, and evidently gave his whole attention to his friend's narrative.

“They did say the great Duke contrived to be in high favour with the Pretender, and secretly opposed our having a King from Hanover; this is as like as not, and after what I saw with my own eyes, though I can't abide wooden shoes and popery, any more than I can the devil, or a glandered horse, I should say, it wasn't at all surprising.”

"What did you see, John?" quietly inquired Rackstraw, as he filled his companion's mug with ale.

"I saw the Hanoverian King almost as soon as he came over, Mister Butler," replied the other; and then replacing his wig, which had almost fallen off, added in a lower tone, "I don't like to say anything likely to be twisted into treason—and these are ticklish times when an honest coachman aint no safer than a lord—but had his Hanoverian Majesty come to me to be my deputy in driving the Brigadier's carriage, on the first look at him, I should have said he was hardly fit to be trusted with the washing of the wheels."

The butler was too prudent to make any comment on such a dangerous subject as their unpopular sovereign; but as his associate took a draught, his silence passed unobserved.

"But looks mustn't always be trusted," said John, as though he thought he had said too much. "I dare say an honest cheerful face ain't so necessary to a king as it is to a coachman; so I don't pretend to blame King George on account of his want of handsomeness. His appearance might do very well for a throne, however ill it

would become a coach-box ; and I don't doubt at all that a good shilling would go for twelve-pence, though the King's head on it was as ugly as sin."

" Undoubtedly, John."

" Well, let the King look like a cobbler, there's no act of Parliament to shut him out of his rights ; so I shouldn't be led away by that. I've heard of people though who carry about them little pictures of the Pretender, and when any one remarks on the King's features or person, they shew how prodigious good looking is the Chevalier, as they calls him, and make comparisons, which King George would not be altogether pleased with."

" Very indiscreet, John."

" But, Mister Butler, what aggravates this, is the queer cattle as the Elector of Hanover thought proper to bring over with him. There wasn't one of them that looked respectable enough to be harnessed with a costermonger's donkey."

" Bless my heart, John, you don't say so !"

" Every word I'm saying is as true as that osse eat oats. Now I don't pretend to be much of a politician, or care to meddle with what don't belong to my place ; but I can't help thinking that

if Hanover is the fine country it was cried up to be, in the good old times ; as far as Englishmen have been allowed to judge, men and women must be amongst the worst of its productions."

"But what have you seen of the men and women?"

"Seen!—I've seen enough to make my hair stand on end," exclaimed John, quite forgetting the very evident fact, that his bald head was protected by an artificial covering. "First of all there was the women. I'm not very squeamish myself; have known of some queer goings on in families; and remember even as far back as the gay doings of our merry monarch, Charles II., who played old Harry amongst the women. But then as I have heard from them as was eye witnesses, King Charles had some sort of excuse for being fond of them, for there wasn't one of the whole team, but what was the prettiest piece of flesh that eye ever looked upon; perfect in all her paces, young, full of blood, and in first rate condition. But the *frows*, as they call them, who stabled themselves in King George's palace, after he got the crown, were of all the animals I ever beheld, the most worthless, ugly, ill-shaped,

worn-out, ill-conditioned screws, that ever were sent to the knackers."

The cautious butler was too busy re-filling his pipe, to make any remark on this extraordinary description of the royal favourites; and the only audible sounds that followed the termination of the sentence, were two or three words from one of the housemaids, respecting the *juxta-position* of "a dark man and a fair woman"—a chuckle of delight from the grinning Pompey—and a sound partaking of the two-fold character of a grunt and a snore, from the sleeping Mrs. Molly.

"I can't say much more for the men," resumed the coachman, "though of the two, they looked certainly the most wholesome. There was Count this, and Baron t'other; and some said, notwithstanding their titles, they were the most un-a-count-able beings ever seen in England. But the King's prime favourites of the male sex were two heathen Turks, he had taken prisoner in the Imperial wars, who were said to be hand and glove with their master, and could drive and turn him in any direction. All these outlandish creatures combined to get for themselves whatever came in their way; and I have been told they

filched from the corn-bin of the state to an extent that left the cattle that did the work, scarcely a good feed a-day. The women, however, ugly as they were, took care to have the best stalls, and lived at rack and manger at the expense of their owner, in a way no fortune could stand. The King could not render them respectable or decent in their appearance; it was out of his power to make them in the least less intolerably old or less outrageously ugly; but he seemed to think he could never do enough for them. He gave them buckets full of guineas, and allowed them to take whatever they asked for, or didn't ask for. The consequence was, if they heard of any thing worth having, they would try to get it by hook or by crook; and if an Archbishop died, or a Lord Chancellor resigned, these unchristian looking old faggots would rush to their prodigal patron, and worry him to bestow the vacant posts upon them. No matter how unfit they were to draw in such harness, they knew what a warm stable and what capital feeds these Archbishops and Lord Chancellors had, and that was all they cared about.

“Now it so chanced, Mister Rackstraw, that after leaving the great Duke I took service with

one of the King's German ladies : of course without knowing who or what she was. I'll never take a Missis without a character again, as long as I drives osse !” exclaimed he with fervour. “ Servants can't be too particular, and if the Master or Missis can't give at least a twelve-month's good character with themselves, you may be sure that ain't a proper place for a respectable upper servant.”

“ Of course, John,” replied the butler, evidently regarding the observation with all the respect of an axiom.

“ I was led away like a colt in a paddock after a whisp of hay, by the prospect of pushing my fortune at Court ; and when I found the halter had been slipped over my head, and I was fairly in for service, I soon discovered the prospect was all a catch. There seemed to be nothing going on but bribery and corruption : the lady had no more conscience than beauty, and seemed to care for nothing but plundering and cheating. Indeed her conduct would have disgraced the commonest baggage that lived upon the streets. I found myself driven out of my pace, and began to kick, till things getting worse, I one day got the bit in my mouth and bolted right away. I saw, however,

enough of the doings at Court with her and the rest of the ladies from Hanover to make me thank my stars I had been born a coachman instead of a courtier. Bless your heart, it's not a place for our young Madam at all. Every horse to his crib say I; but beauty and good nature are as much out of place there, as I should be at young Madam's toilet."

"*You* at young Madam's toilet!" exclaimed Mrs. Kitty, who had been drawn from the attractions of fortune telling, by some observations that had met her ear respecting the behaviour of the Court ladies. "Vastly well, indeed! I should think one of the coach-horses would be quite as useful there."

"And a monstrous deal more ornamental," added Mrs. Lucy.

This caused both John Coachman and the butler to laugh so heartily, that Mrs. Molly, who had been jerked out of a dream, in which she fancied she had been fruitlessly engaged in playing at the rustic game of bob-apple, which every time she made a bite at, most tantalisingly bobbed away from her—a delusion caused by the continual jerking of her head we have already alluded to—jumped up on her seat, looking be-

wildered and very much astonished at the laughing faces that met her gaze.

"Why bless my heart, John Coachman! La, Mister Rackstraw," she cried at last turning from one to the other. "I've been dreaming surely!"

"Both surely and securely, Mrs. Molly," replied the butler; and then there was another laugh, which the fiery head of the kitchen was in doubt whether to be angry or amused with. However, before she could make up her mind, the door opened, and a new actor entered upon the scene who completely took off her attention.

He was a young man of a genteel figure and handsome, but effeminate features, his hair carefully powdered and dressed in the reigning mode, and his person as carefully clothed in the Lepel livery; for in spite of his affected elegance of manner and his genteel appearance, he was no more important a personage than James, the Brigadier's new footman.

Nevertheless, though his station was humble, James had managed in the few days he had passed at Petersham Manor, to create a very decided impression of his consequence upon the majority of his fellow servants. Even Mrs. Molly was mollified whenever, with his careless yet not un-

graceful behaviour, he presented himself before her.

His manners had something in them superior to all footmen of her acquaintance, which boasted of a list of no mean length ; and although there could be little doubt this was merely given at second hand from some polished original, in whose service he had been, it went a great way in his favour in the kitchen, and in the servant's hall worked wonders.

John Coachman, though he never could tell why, always looked up to him with an air of respect, and Pompey never met his glance, but he grinned his approbation, as he gazed in mingled wonder and gratification. The gardener was heard to mutter something very much resembling the word "Puppy," when James was once shewing off his gentility a little stronger than usual ; and there was every reason to believe he held him in mortal aversion. The butler, like a prudent man as he was, whatever opinion he had of the new comer kept to himself, but behaved to him with his usual cordiality.

As to the girls, Mrs. Kitty and Mrs. Lucy, they were completely fascinated and captivated, and each rivalled the other as far as she dared in the

presence of the dreaded Mrs. Molly, in shewing their new fellow-servant the most encouraging attentions. They made way for him to sit between them, as he lounged lazily towards the table humming an air, and taking a pinch of snuff from a large round box, with a figure of Cupid on the lid. Then as if to shew the polish of his manners, he with the air of a sovereign to a Duchess, presented the open box to Mrs. Molly, who with a profusion of the properest phrases she could think of, though in quite as great a flutter as if the compliment had been paid her by a nobleman, inserted her fat red fingers into the pungent powder and applied it liberally to her capacious nostrils.

Whilst she was shewing by a series of sternutations loud enough to be heard throughout the house, the efficacy of the snuff, the polite and agreeable new comer was handing the box to the butler and the coachman, who pipe in hand, rose from their chairs to acknowledge the civility in a way becoming their superior positions; then placing it on the table between the smiling and blushing girls, without deigning to bestow a look on the draught players, he took the seat that had been offered to him.

"Stab my vitals, child!" he exclaimed, addressing Mrs. Kitty, and drawing a perfumed handkerchief over the lower part of his face, "you seem, to-night, positively to have lost your agreeable spirits. May I be allowed to inquire what has been the subject of your conversation, to have had so terrible and disastrous an effect on you, and all this good company."

"La, bless your heart, Mr. James," cried John Coachman, who was never known to be backward when a spokesman was required, "we were merely speaking of our young Madam; and I had just said I considered it a burning shame so pretty and admirable a creature should go to Court to have any thing to do with them German things as are the leaders of the team there."

"Well, I've heard of those Hanoverian hussies," exclaimed Mrs. Molly, a flash of indignation breaking over her already too illuminated countenance. "I'm ashamed of King George! Couldn't he find plenty of Englishwomen, that he should disgrace himself with a pack of greedy foreigners?"

"Perhaps, Mrs. Molly, he couldn't find any women in this country sufficiently plain to please him," remarked the new comer in his drawling

tone, as he handed the snuff box from Mrs. Lucy to Mrs. Kitty.

"Perhaps," added John, after a powerful sneeze, "he could find none bad enough."

"I have seen the persons to whom our esteemed friend, John Coachman alludes," replied the footman. "Both the Schulenberg and the Kielmansegge; and am ready to aver, pon my life! that a cross between a pug-dog and a toad-fish, could never be half so abominably and atrociously hideous as either of them."

There was a general laugh at this extravagant simile, in which Mrs. Molly might be heard above every one.

"But pon my life!" drawled out their fellow servant, "I take the very fact of the Court being disgraced by such insufferable monsters, as an unanswerable argument for the presence of some of our most irresistible beauties. In sober truth, I shall be obliged to give up going to Court, if something is not done shortly to make the place more agreeable. Positively the present state of things is quite shocking." Here he helped himself to a pinch of snuff. "Quite insufferable to any man of sensibility or refinement—stab my vitals!"

The women looked sympathizing, the men in various degrees of indignation, save Pompey, who expressed his sense of enjoyment by sundry guttural sounds that usually did duty for a laugh. The gardener, however, appeared more indignant at the speaker than with his subject; and the butler seemed as though he thought too evident a display on his part of sympathy with the speaker might not be prudent.

"But to associate with such horrid bad characters as are these German baggages," observed the Coachman, again taking the pipe from his mouth, "I am loath our young Madam should come to such a degradation. It is like putting a young, valuable, thorough bred, to draw in harness with some broken down, stone blind old dray oss, hardly good enough to put in the shafts of a sand cart."

"Pon my life, so it is, my worthy charioteer," replied the genteel footman. "You've expressed my sentiments in a manner I could never have attempted, positively. But what are you drinking, child?" he added, taking up the mug placed before Mrs. Kitty, and putting it to his lips—"Disgusting beer, by all that's vulgar!" he ex-

claimed, with every symptom of abhorrence, as he put down the liquid.

"If you don't happen to like beer, Mr. James," here cried Mrs. Molly, in a peculiarly winning accent, "I have a bottle of strong waters, that I have been recommended to take when I've got the vapours, which is quite at your service."

"Wholesome malt liquor's a deal too good for such a coxcomb," muttered the gardener in an inaudible tone.

"It's a capital brew this, Mister James," observed John Coachman, encouragingly.

"Very capital, indeed," added Rackstraw. "Indeed we rather pride ourselves upon it."

"But if he don't happen to like drinking beer," sharply observed Mrs. Molly, bringing forward a well-filled black bottle, "he may leave it alone, I suppose? This is Liberty Hall here. We forces no one to swallow what they doesn't like. Here are the strong waters I spoke of, Mr. James," added she, turning with a smile meant to be very gracious to her new fellow-servant. "You're vastly welcome to 'em, I assure you. With a little hot water and sugar, there's lots of things in this world a precious deal less pleasant to taste. Help

yourself, Mister James, and make yourself comfortable."

James made many gracious acknowledgments, and did help himself; after he had mixed the steaming beverage in a vessel brought him for that purpose, he very civilly handed it to his female fellow-servants. "Mrs. Molly, I kiss your fair hand. Ladies, I drink to our better acquaintance. Gentlemen, my service to you:" he cried with all the ceremonious politeness of a finished courtier at a royal banquet. He drank a fair portion of it at once, making a decided wry face at the flavour, but it did not deter him from having recourse to it again.

"But I was about to say," added the new comer, addressing the two seniors, "that the very existence of these German monstrosities at Court made it imperative that the divinest creatures in England ought to be seen there. Indeed, I am in a condition to state, from very high authority, that it is intended the most beautiful of our young countrywomen shall be placed there as quickly as possible. Indeed, I have heard that his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales"—

"Sad doings there too," suddenly observed John Coachman, who never missed an opportunity of

making his voice heard. "A friend of mine who looks after the royal carriages, says that the manner in which the father and the son conducts themselves towards each other is quite scandalous in a Christian country. The King regards the Prince with the bitterest feelings of animosity, and the Prince looks on his father with about as much affection, as I should on a horse as had kicked my front teeth down my throat."

"Gad a mercy, friend, you seem well informed on these points!" exclaimed the genteel footman, with a half-concealed yawn. "But concerning the Prince, all I have to say is that his Royal Highness has in contemplation to establish a Court of his own, to be as much distinguished for the extreme loveliness of the ladies, who shall compose it, as that of his royal father has been for their abominable and horrible ugliness."

"A very proper proceeding, Mister James," said Mrs. Molly, approvingly.

"Bless your heart!" cried John Coachman, fervently, "why, if the young 'un chooses to set up a team of his own, and picks 'em out well matched, and well broke to run in harness, he'll distance the old coach in no time."

"Have you heard of any lady in particular

likely to be appointed in the Prince's establishment?" inquired the butler with evident interest for more intelligence.

"Undoubtedly, most esteemed and honoured butler," replied the other affectedly. "My friend the Prince, that is to say," hastily correcting himself, "the Prince's"—

"Shoe-black!" added the gardener in a caustic tone.

"Thank you, friend," replied the genteel footman, graciously; then continued with an unembarrassed air, "my friend the Prince's shoe-black informed me, it was decided that the Princess, his Royal Highness's inestimable consort, was to appoint four of the most angelic, the-a-most ravishing, divine, beautiful young ladies of quality, that could be found in England as her personal attendants; and that her Royal Highness had already named—"

All the company was listening with more than ordinary attention to the account that was being rendered to them, of this interesting and important arrangement; but of course they were anxious to catch the names of the fair creatures who had been selected to put to shame the Hanoverian frights. Greatly to their vexation,

however, just as the speaker came to mention the honoured individuals, a sudden and violent peal at the door bell made them start from their chairs, and hurried them away to see who was the untimely visitor,

CHAPTER V.

OUR HEROINE'S FIRST ADVENTURE.

But Bellenden I needs must name,
Who, as down stairs she jumps,
Sings "O'er the hills and far away,"
Despising doleful dumps.

LORD CHESTERFIELD.

"*Ma foi*, now I look at you, child, you've grown vastly handsome!" exclaimed in a lively manner, in some slight degree tinged with affection, a young and extremely beautiful woman dressed completely à-la-mode, as she gazed with evident gratification on the Brigadier's daughter. "When I left you in the careful guardianship of the peerless Penelope Stiffandstern to finish my education in France, you were a mere girl,—not without good looks certainly, *ma chère*, but in nothing varying from all the other good-looking

girls, whose sober yet rosy physiognomies were wont to be seen in a row, rising above their white pinafores on the benches of Minerva House, like so many beau-pots in a gardener's window."

This complimentary speech was from a much loved school-fellow, Mary Bellenden, with whom Mary Lepel had so oft sworn an eternal friendship; with whom she had so oft shared her stolen readings of forbidden romances; and with whom she had so oft been in the habit of depositing her most sacred confidences and all her romantic conceptions. The two Marys, in short, were the female Damon and Pythias of the school, and when they were forced to separate, they entered into the most solemn engagements when both had finished their studies, to be as much together as possible.

Two years had elapsed, since Mary Bellenden had left her young friends at Minerva House; and these two years she had passed in the Convent of St. Omer, then a fashionable finishing school for the young ladies of this country. What she had acquired there, and what she had learned in a subsequent visit to Paris had very much enlarged her ideas, not only as regards morals, but as affects a subject no less important to a young and

pretty woman—dress. Mary Bellenden, on the strength of her dressing in the last Parisian mode, and on her familiarity with certain phrases and actions she had heard and seen in constant employment amongst her French friends, together with a happy audacity and never failing good temper, appeared inclined to play a particularly leading part on her return to her friends in England.

She was of a noble family, being the daughter of Lord Bellenden ; of a medium height, possessed an expressive oval face, with features delicately distinct, very brilliant eyes, dark hair, and a fine symmetrical figure.

It was the late arrival of the schoolfellow of their master's daughter that had so much disturbed the Brigadier's domestics ; and now after having enjoyed as much rest as could be obtained, as soon as their extraordinary conversational powers had become a little subdued, the two schoolfellows were sitting together in Mary Lepel's delightful little sitting room, recounting to each other their individual history with all the adventures, impressions, doubts, fears, and pleasures they had experienced, since they had parted at the well known mansion in Newington Butts.

This honoured chamber deserves some description. The window looked out on a beautiful prospect to a considerable distance; a honeysuckle was trailed round it, and the sill contained as many flowers as could be placed there; a goldfinch in a cage hung on one side, and a tame squirrel on the other. The room was handsomely furnished with all requisites for a lady's ease, and possessed several pretty ornaments, that gave a still more feminine aspect to the refinement the ordinary decorations expressed. These ornaments chiefly consisted of China figures of shepherds and shepherdesses, pretty nick-nacks in carved ivory and Tunbridge ware—birthday presents from esteemed friends and relatives—a few shells and minerals, and a small collection of favourite volumes, chiefly romances, plays, and poetry.

This room had been styled by the domestics, “young Madam's study,” to distinguish it from the neat and comfortable bed-room adjoining, which was “young Madam's chamber:” for here she had been wont to retire, to read, to work, or play on the harpsichord or lute—both of which instruments were there—when she could escape from her domestic duties, or when the Brigadier was absent from Petersham Manor. Here she took refuge and forgot all her troubles, her responsi-

bilities and apprehensions, over a new volume from France, or a new sonata from Italy.

But the chief delight of Mary Lepel was to retire to a place so sacred from intrusion, with a young friend of her own sex, particularly one who had been her associate at Minerva House, there to indulge in reminiscences of their school career, and above all there to repose a mutual confidence; and after listening to a detailed account of her friend's adventures, thoughts, and feelings with reference to one all absorbing subject to the female heart, to express her own.

The little heart of the Brigadier's daughter was a complete store-house of romance; but the most romantic of her ideas was her complete identification of herself with her favourite heroines, whom she longed to imitate in the strangeness and mystery of their adventures. Anything that happened in the slightest degree out of the way, she regarded as being enveloped in mystery, and whatever occurred to her in the least to vary her customary routine, she was eager to look upon as an adventure. These impressions always formed a prominent feature in her confidences; and now that she had got with her the best beloved of all her bosom friends, Mary Bellenden, she was burning with

anxiety to relate a certain very extraordinary adventure that had recently happened to her.

But Mary Bellenden seemed in very little humour to listen. She had her own budget to dispose of; and as she was the elder and had seen so much more of the world, and moreover had finished her education at St. Omer, and had just come from Paris, of course it was but right she should claim precedence. Indeed, of her superiority, she appeared so sensible, that no one could mistake the patronising tone and air affected by the young beauty towards her junior; and the compassion she seemed to feel for her friend, for not having had the advantages she possessed.

And then the use she made of her stock of familiar French phrases and gestures, in her own estimation gave her so vast a superiority over her friend—who, although a tolerable French scholar, rarely ventured upon a foreign word in conversation, and knew nothing of the eloquence of shrugs and the thousand and one resources of French pantomime—that she could not avoid, with all her affection for her, which was deep and genuine, regarding her English manners with a feeling mingled of pity and contempt.

“Yes, Mary, *ma mignonne*,” exclaimed the

young lady, as she sat opposite the daughter of her host knitting a purse, whilst the other was as busily employed at some worsted work; “you are very much improved in your face and figure; but *pardonnez-moi*, you have the most barbarous notion of dressing yourself, child.” Here followed an elevation of the shoulders to the ears.

“Why, what can there be so mightily amiss in my dress?” innocently inquired the Brigadier’s daughter, glancing at her neat and not ungraceful though somewhat formal morning robe.

“Amiss, child!” echoed her companion, with a peculiar elevation of the eye-brows, as she glanced rapidly from her feet to her head. “*Ma foi*, every thing is amiss. *Par exemple*, look at your head-dress—did ever any one see any thing so abominable!”

Now the head-dress of Mary Lepel, as described in a preceding page, was certainly far from being unbecoming, for the beautiful silken tresses tied with ribbon, produced an effect that would have delighted Sir Godfrey Kneller, and which had already occasioned a tolerably extensive creation of fugitive verse from various as yet secret admirers.

“*Voilà*, look at mine!” exclaimed the fair

Anglo-Parisian ; and then in a triumphant tone added, “*Que dites-vous de cela ?*”

Her friend looked as if she did not know exactly what to say of it. If the truth could be told, she did not quite like it, and had many times gazed at the curious mass that rose above the head of her beautiful friend, wondering what it was composed of; as the powder quite concealed the substance on which it was laid.

Mary Bellenden gave her head the slightest shake in the world, as she again raised her eyes to that of her lovely schoolfellow; but it was a shake, that in Paris at least, was of great significance. “*Ma foi*, at Versailles with such a head, you would be as much stared at as a native Indian. *Va te faire coiffer.*”

Mary Lepel promised, if her father approved, she would lose no time in having her hair arranged according to the French fashion.

“*Oui, oui, ma petite,*” cried her companion with a wave of her white hand, such as she had often seen employed by Parisian *belles*. “It must be done, be assured. And now for your dress. Did any one ever see so barbarous a fashion? *Pardonnez-moi, ma chère fille*, it is only fit for a milk maid.”

Now any indifferent English spectator would have been ready to assert, that the graceful figure of Mary Lepel was as well set off as her beautiful hair ; but he of course would not have been so well informed on the important subject of the very last new fashion, to which ladies must conform in every article of personal decoration, as Mary Bellenden.

“ *Voilà !* ” exclaimed the young lady rising from her seat and turning herself round for the better inspection of her companion. Mary Bellenden displayed a form, beautifully fitted at the bust, with a very long stomacher, and swelling out from the waist as if her drapery hung over a barrel or a drum-head. She paced up and down, drawing aside her skirts to display a pair of red morocco shoes, with heels so high, Mary Lepel wondered how she could keep her footing.

“ This is how a lady of quality should appear,” she added, walking back with a well satisfied air to her seat ; “ and I must insist, child, that you dress as becomes your station. *Ma foi*, I wonder what Philip Dormer would have said had he seen you at Paris ? ”

“ Philip Dormer ! ” cried the Brigadier’s daughter with animation.

“Yes, child, the handsome, elegant and accomplished Philip Dormer, who will in time be the Earl of Chesterfield. Do you not know him, *ma chère*? ”

“No, I have not seen him ; but I heard my father say, the Prince of Wales was partial to him, and had lately appointed him to a situation in his Household. He was one of your admirers at Paris, I suppose, Mary ? ”

“Of course, child. *Il a bien de l'esprit*, and I must confess I like witty men. I met him several times. He declared himself quite smitten ; ready to give up the ghost *pour l'amour*. I found him agreeable enough : indeed he was monstrous attentive to me, vastly polite, my most devoted, and all that ; but I did not think it necessary to fall in love just then, so I only amused myself with him, *pour passer le temps*. ”

It may perhaps be necessary to inform the reader that the fair Bellenden exaggerated a little as to the extent of her acquaintance with the handsome Philip Dormer—a failing not at all uncommon with her dear sex, when mentioning to each other men whose position accomplishments, or personal attractions render them desirable acquaintances.

Philip Dormer was a very elegant young man of high connexions, his nearest relative, Lord Stanhope, being one of the most influential ministers of George I., and his grandfather being the Earl of Chesterfield ; and although rumours respecting his wildness and extravagance had already got into general circulation, they were not likely at this particular period to prevent any young lady of fashion from desiring to have him at her feet, or where it was safe, to boast of her having brought him there.

“ I’m sure it must be very delightful to make such a conquest,” said the Brigadier’s daughter, with a sound very much like a sigh ; “ but I heard some one say at dinner last week—I think it was the new Dean of St. Patrick’s ; I’m not sure it wasn’t Mr. Pope—that he was known to associate a good deal with that abominable Duke of Wharton, and that singular Earl of Peterborough, and other reckless characters, with whom he joined in all sorts of mad frolics, and shocking—”

“ *Ma foi,*” cried her companion, laughingly, “ he told me all about it ; he confessed to me he was a member of the Hell-fire club, and had been employed as Provost Martial to the Emperor of

the Mohocks. He narrated all sorts of devices he had had recourse to, and the tricks he had played. *Par ciel!* some of them certainly, if done by a common person, would have brought his head into the pillory; but with people of quality, such things are mere *bagatelles*, child."

"I suppose, Mr. Dormer was not your only admirer, Mary?" inquired her young schoolfellow archly.

"La, child, how you talk!" exclaimed the other quickly. "I had a score of them while I remained in Paris."

"A score, Mary?" inquired her friend, looking up with some astonishment.

"*Oui, ma petite*, a score at the least: I won't say there might not have been a few more. First there was the Duc d'Orléans"—

"The Duc d'Orléans!" cried the Brigadier's daughter, with increased wonder.

"Oh, the Duke was the most ardent of all," her schoolfellow replied, with a little laugh, the *fac-simile* of one she had heard employed with great effect by a Frenchwoman of the highest fashion. "Then there was the Abbé Dubois—"

"What, a Popish priest, Mary?"

"I had seven abbés, three bishops and one cardinal," said the fair Bellenden, scarcely noticing the interruption; "but if I had a partiality for any one of these reverend gentlemen, *ma foi*, it ought to have been for the good Abbé Dubois, for he was the greatest rogue of them all. He introduced himself to me as the Duke's agent, and whilst displaying the monstrous intensity of his master's passion, he made the most prodigious demonstrations of his own."

"What a wretch!" burst from her indignant companion, who apparently could not reconcile herself to such priestly devotion, "I should be terrified to death if I fell among such infamous people."

"*Je ne les crains point,*" replied the other with a shrug of much meaning; "then I had five captains, three counts, two marquises, one general—and let me remember—*en vérité, ma chère*, I had six judges."

"Six judges!" cried out her friend at the top of her voice.

"*Sans doute, six judges,*" quietly responded her schoolfellow. "Every one makes love in France, *ma mignonne*; from the prince on the throne to

the link boys in the gutters, this is the first business of their lives ; and it possesses so firm a hold upon their minds, that their last thought at night and their first in the morning, is how they shall most effectually recommend themselves to their female acquaintance."

" You must really have had some extraordinary adventures among so singular a people."

" Adventures ! la, child ! I have had adventures out of all possibility of counting. I have seven times designedly been made to lose my way, that I might be put in the right direction by unknown adorers, wanting an introduction. I have five times been rescued by robbers, by as many devoted swains anxious to testify their devotion ; twice saved from fire, and once from drowning. I have ten times been run away with ; four times suddenly found myself locked in strange rooms in mansions where I had been visiting. I have been the cause of fifteen duels, six *lettres de cachet*, drove five despairing lovers to the cloister, and eight to the army desperately intent to lead forlorn hopes, or rush at impenetrable positions. *Oh, bon Dieu !* adventures ! My dventures would fill volumes."

"It's wonderful how you could have escaped so many perils," observed the other almost breathless with astonishment.

"*Ma foi*, such matters have ceased to be wonderful in France," coolly replied her friend.

It might in some respects be true, that the picture the fair scholar of St Omer had submitted to her youthful friend, was a little over-drawn; nevertheless, it cannot but be admitted, that the presence of a very young and beautiful woman at the gay capital of France at this period was attended with many risks, not only to herself, but to the numberless highly susceptible gentlemen who might happen to behold her; and it is not improbable that the extreme loveliness of the fair Bellenden occasioned her a greater display of gallantry than may have been quite agreeable to her. We entertain, however, just the slightest suspicion in the world, that for many of the features in the very lively description we have just given, the gay beauty was indebted to her own imagination.

She, however, as if she thought she had not as yet half sufficiently astonished her inexperienced companion, launched into narratives of the most

extraordinary adventures, that certainly ever happened to so young a female; and a gallant band of abbés, counts, captains, judges, and so forth were brought on the scene one after the other and occasionally a few together, saying and doing things which more and more astonished her unsophisticated listener.

Poor Mary Lepel never thought of doubting a word of these marvellous statements; and as her schoolfellow proceeded with a happy assurance, mixing real names and real places with events of the most apocryphal character, she seemed to think her favourite heroines had not met with half the strange and wonderful adventures her dear friend had. At last when wonder could be excited no further, Mary Bellenden came to a sudden check in her revelations.

“But now, child,” said she, in a different tone, “it is your turn; I must hear *your* adventures. Indeed, *ma belle*, I have been dying to hear them, ever since I entered the house.”

There assuredly might be room for some doubt as to the dangerous state of anxiety the young lady had indicated; but as to the extreme desire of the other to disburthen her mind to her, there

was none. There was, however, a vast contrast in the manner in which these confidential communications were made.

The more accomplished beauty, who could boast of her stay in Paris, entered with the most happy audacity into the relation of anecdotes and incidents, that the other could not listen to without becoming bewildered with wonder and alarm; while she, when her turn came to be narrator, as though overpowered with a sense of the importance of what she was going to communicate, went hesitatingly and tremulously on with her story, which when uttered, could not but be thought extremely insignificant, when compared to the extraordinary declarations that had just preceded it.

If the truth must be told, the modest and romantic little mistress of Petersham Manor had but very little to confide. She expatiated with considerable emphasis on sundry squeezes of the hand she had received from some of the most agreeable of her father's guests, and gave a long and circumstantial account of the marked admiration, during the whole of every dinner, of a sea-captain; but the squeezes were far more cordial than amorous, and the other instance was still more delusive, for the poor captain happened to

suffer from the often puzzling infirmity of an obliquity of vision, so that when the Brigadier's daughter was satisfied her charms engrossed the attention of this new admirer, his gaze was fixed upon the good things on his plate.

Mary Lepel then went into a long catalogue of compliments and attentions, and gave graphic sketches of the various attractive features of the different gentlemen to whom she was so indebted. After these, sundry neatly folded pieces of writing paper were produced, which, when carefully opened, the fair Lepel with an ill-concealed expression of extreme gratification began to read. These were various poetical compositions, which had been conveyed to her at divers times, mostly by some singular channel. They were of the usual description—expressing high flown compliments, and laboured metaphors to the party addressed, and infinite respect, and inexpressible devotion of the party addressing. Some were rather pretty, for Mary Lepel ought to have inspired the dullest votary of the Tuneful Nine; and many were very absurd. Nevertheless, the Brigadier's daughter, in an ecstacy of delight, read each with its proper illustrative comments, and all with ready and eloquent commendation.

“*Ma foi!* is this all you have got to tell me?” inquired Mary Bellenden, with her most significant shrug, secretly pitying her young friend for the barrenness of her reminiscences. “What a vast deal you have got to say about nothing, child! Why, if I had began to tell you of the hand-pressings, the looks, the compliments, and the verses I have received, I should despair of ever getting to the end. *Ah, ma petite,* it is easy to see you have not received part of your education at a French convent, or you would have laid no stress on such trifles; but have you nothing else to tell me—no adventure of any sort?”

“Yes, dear Mary, I have had a very singular adventure,” she replied, humiliated by her friend’s depreciation of her little interesting revelations. “A most singular adventure, indeed.”

“Pray let us have it. I am impatient to hear what it is about. *Quelle aventure vous est-il arrivée?*”

“It is very mysterious, Mary.”

“So much the better. An adventure is nothing without a sufficiency of mystery. *Commencez, commencez, ma mignonne.*”

At this urging the Brigadier’s daughter, with

much embarrassment and no little circumlocution, began to relate, that she was in the habit of walking in the garden, at a certain hour in the morning, to notice the state of the fruit and vegetables as to their readiness for domestic purposes; and that every day for the last three days, directly she entered the walk that leads along the wall where the best peaches grow, she heard the sounds of a flute, evidently proceeding from the other side. She could not help listening, it was so exquisite a performance, and the concealed musician played the most plaintive and touching airs—it was as sweet as the thrush and as tender as the nightingale. Directly she entered the walk he commenced, and he left off the moment she quitted it.

She owned she thought it very strange, very strange indeed; but the strangest part of it was yesterday at the same hour, she heard as usual the same beautiful playing; but after she had listened a short time it appeared as if the instrument was abandoned, for the playing stopped, and the player commenced a song which was all about love, and the name of Mary was mentioned in it several times, so that it required no great

stretch of imagination to satisfy herself for whom the music was intended.

To Mary Lepel the mystery of it lay in the extreme care with which the musician kept out of sight, and in his managing to reserve his performances till she entered that particular walk : and as she poured out her marvellous narrative to her confidante, who could scarcely keep her countenance, she could not avoid indulging in innumerable conjectures as to who was the concealed musician, why he took such measures to attract her attention, and what was his object in continuing this mysterious serenade.

Her fair companion heard her out with admirable patience, and when she had concluded burst into a loud fit of laughter. The Brigadier's daughter felt satisfied that these periodical performances betokened some very extraordinary adventure, and she was completely under the impression that she was about to become a heroine, worthy of the pages of "Le Grand Cyrus."

"*Ma foi*, you call this an adventure, do you!" exclaimed Mary Bellenden, as soon as her mirth had a little subsided. "Why child, before I had

been a week at St. Omer, I had had at least fifty little incidents of this kind. In France *we* hold these sort of things as matters of course. But have you no suspicion who is your serenader?"

" Not the slightest."

" Have you never attempted to find out who it was, by causing the other side of the wall to be explored?"

" No. I have never mentioned the subject to any one but yourself."

" I suppose you would like to discover your admirer, eh, *ma petite*!"

" I am dying to hear who he is."

" There is nothing so easy. It is now close to the hour: let us go together into the garden. I doubt not it will repay us for the trouble."

A very few minutes after this the two friends were seen walking leisurely together through the gravel walks of the Brigadier's garden—his romantic little daughter convinced she was entering on an adventure full of the deepest mystery. Certainly two lovelier creatures were never seen in any garden, save that of Eden, as they tripped lightly along on their way to the path by the side of the wall. The dark yet extremely

expressive features of Mary Bellenden were lit up with a saucy sense of her own power, whilst the fair complexion and child-like innocence of features of the unsophisticated Mary Lepel, were full of interest and anxiety.

As yet they had met nothing and heard nothing, and as they turned into the walk beside the indicated wall, and could distinguish nothing in the most remote degree approaching the expected serenade, both began to fear they should return as wise as they came. They had proceeded, however, but a very few steps, when they came to a sudden halt.

“Hush!” exclaimed the Brigadier’s daughter, her little heart palpitating as though she had unexpectedly found herself in a position of extreme danger. The sounds of a flute were heard, the instrument played with singular delicacy and taste. The friends listened. The performer was evidently on the other side of the wall, which was of a height that effectually screened him from observation on the garden side.

“Hush,” again exclaimed Mary Lepel in a whisper, “he is going to sing.” And then in clear rich tones a voice commenced singing the following words :

THE AVOWAL.

Said Daphne to Chloe one day they reclined
On a moss covered bank by a murmuring rill,
“ Come tell me what shepherd is most to your mind,
As we watch the young lambs climb the side of the hill.”
“ Oh Daphne !” the rosy cheeked Chloe replied,
And she held down her head half ashamed to confess,
“ If Granny would cease so to frown and to chide
More happy should I be than I can express.”
“ Oh,” said Daphne to Chloe, “ ne’er mind the good dame,
When old folks were young they have felt just the same.”

“ I first met the youth at a dance on the green,
And thought, as he moved on so fair and so tall,
There were plenty of handsome young swains to be seen,
But Lubin, dear Lubin, was flow’r of them all.
He asked me to dance, and he led me along,
With such rich silken curls waving over his brow—
Oh, Daphne, though Granny declares it was wrong,
I could not help feeling, I can’t tell you how.
“ Oh,” said Daphne to Chloe, “ ne’er mind the old crone,
When she was as young she’d a heart like your own.”

“ When next I met Lubin ’twas down in the grove,
With the nightingale’s song falling sweet on the ear ;
And there with such fervour he whispered his love,
That my heart thrilled with joy, as I trembled with fear.
Oh the rapture I knew, it can never be told,
As he vowed to be constant, and called me his own :

Oh, Daphne, I wish Granny wouldn't so scold,

Because in the grove I met Lubin alone."

" Oh," said Daphne to Chloe, " ne'er mind the good dame,
When she was as young she has done just the same."

Mary Bellenden gazed around her with her quick intelligent eyes as the song commenced, and soon remarked a ladder that had recently been employed by the gardener to enable him to trail some of the wall-fruit. She pointed it out to her friend, and presently these beautiful girls were seen quietly bearing the rude ladder between them; and then they placed it against the wall, as near as possible to the spot whence the sounds were proceeding.

Mary Bellenden offered to hold the foot of the ladder whilst her friend ascended to take a peep over the wall; this arrangement the Brigadier's daughter did not seem to approve at all, till her friend convinced her that as it was her own adventure, she ought to take the most prominent place in it.

At last her timidity gave way before the assurances of her more experienced friend, and she ascended the spokes of the ladder almost overcome by her feelings. She was fairly embarked in an adventure—the first adventure she had ever

met with. All was mystery and romance. She longed to know who was the concealed musician —of course he was some great personage, or he would not have cared for concealment. If he should turn out to be a second Prince Oroondates, her highest ambition would be satisfied.

Mary Lepel ascended the spokes one by one encouraged by the cheering pleasantry of her friend, and as she rose, her self-confidence seemed to fall. Her heart beat as though it would presently break through her little boddice, and her colour went and came a dozen times in as many minutes. And what a quick succession of ideas presented themselves to her agitated mind !

Suppose he should see her—what should she say to him ? Suppose he should prove old and ill-looking, what a disappointment ! No, he must be young, and it was equally conclusive he must be handsome. Suppose the ladder were to slip, and she should be thrown to the ground !

“ *Courage, ma petite !*” whispered her friend from below.

Mary Lepel’s beautiful head was nearly on a level with the edge of the wall—another step would place her in the position she coveted. Her

palpitations became more rapid. She could not have supported herself in this critical position, but for her profound conviction that nothing in *Le Grand Cyrus* ever could be half so romantic an adventure, as her present elevation on the gardener's ladder. Her concealed admirer ought to be a Prince Oroondates, at least, to repay her for what she was undergoing. The idea that he *might* be such a character, gave her sufficient nerve to mount a step higher.

Suddenly the music ceased, and as her head rose above the wall, so a head arose on the other side—Mary Lepel gave a scream, and found herself in the arms—oh, the horror to her romantic notions—of James, the new footman !

CHAPTER V.

TURNING THE TABLES.

Lives there a man so dull and stupid,
As not to know the power of Cupid?
Where'er the sun his journey races,
That god enjoys his sacred places.

ANON.

“ No, I never shall be able to endure that impudent fellow again !” exclaimed the Brigadier’s daughter petulantly, as she flung herself into a chair in the breakfast room.

“ Nonsense, child !” replied her friend, who, if the truth might be told, could not avoid being amused at the termination of the adventure. “ Take my advice, *ma petite*, do nothing likely to make so ridiculous an affair an entertainment for the town. Leave your foolish swain to me—I will make him know his distance, and repent

his insolence. But what did he say to you?— I'm sure he made some sort of speech; but I could not of course hear so well at the bottom of the ladder, as you could at the top; and when I saw the old gardener coming, I was obliged to give the alarm."

" Oh, I was so frightened, I hardly know what the wretch said; but I believe it was about his mistaking me for one of the maids. I, however, lost no time in descending the ladder at your signal, and getting away from the place as fast as I could, without troubling myself about the fellow's apologies."

" I don't think, in mistaking you for Mrs. Kitty, he paid you any compliment, *ma mig-nonne*."

" Deuce take him, and his compliments too!" cried the young lady in a pet, starting up from her seat, and beginning to pace the room. " His impudence really is unbearable: I never felt so vexed in my life."

" *Ma foi*, it is but an unsatisfactory beginning for you, I must confess, child," quietly observed the other. " But these sort of accidents will occur. In France, they think nothing of them;

and French lacqueys, *ma chère*, are much more forward than English ones."

This consolation did not produce all the effect that was required. The gentle and sensitive nature of Mary Lepel had received a rude shock. Her imagination had played her a very sorry trick, and all her romantic associations had been sent to the right about, in the most summary and undignified way possible. She could not divest her mind of certain apprehensions. "If the affair came to the ears of the great Duchess, what would she think of her?"

She took counsel of her more experienced companion, who laughed away her fears, and even spoke of that important personage, in terms of ridicule and contempt. Very much astonished at this, the Brigadier's daughter made her friend acquainted with the Duchess's recent visit, and the humiliation it brought with it; and informed her of her father's expectations arising out of that dreaded lady's good offices: at which Mary Bellenden, with that happy audacity that was so irresistible with her, laughed still more. She evidently thought very little of the great Duchess, and cared for her still less.

Much confidential conversation followed between the two school-fellows, in which Mary Lepel learned that her friend entertained expectations of obtaining some situation about the person of the Princess of Wales—her father having promised to exercise his influence in procuring for her such an appointment. Upon no firmer basis than existed in this prospect, the fair Bellenden presently erected a most agreeable structure, which did no less credit to her ingenuity, than to her ambition.

In this way an hour passed pleasantly, and Mary Lepel was rapidly recovering from her vexation, when at her companion's wish, she rang the bell for lunch. Very little time elapsed before the door was opened, and James, the new footman entered, bearing a well covered tray. It might have been supposed that he would have exhibited some sense of his delinquency, instead of which he bore a most steady countenance, and proceeded to place the things on the table, as though he was perfectly unconscious of having given offence.

Mary Lepel, apparently, took no notice of him. She sat back in her chair, with a countenance eloquent with indignation; but she neither looked

at him nor near him. Not so her more accomplished school-fellow, who had determined, on observing the fellow very narrowly, with the object of discovering whether it were by presumption or mistake her fair friend had been placed in such undesirable *juxta* position with him on the top of the wall.

Whilst he was placing the tray on the table, Mary Bellenden approached him closely. Suddenly she turned her back to him, and placed her handkerchief to her mouth, as though to prevent a sudden burst of laughter. Whether the ridiculousness of her friend's adventure overpowered her, or the foppish appearance of the Brigadier's footman, was so ludicrous, she could not resist the impulse to laugh; certain it is she was obliged to make a powerful effort to recover her gravity.

The man was about to withdraw as silently as he had entered, when Mary Bellenden suddenly putting on a very grave, and indeed, somewhat severe aspect, turned round, and as it appeared, to his astonishment, suddenly addressed him.

"James, what were you doing at the garden wall, just now?" she inquired. Mary Lepel began patting the carpet with her little foot, evi-

dently striving to put a restraint upon her feelings.

"An it please you, Madam Bellenden," he answered quite at his ease, "I had obtained a ladder for the purpose of getting a bird's nest, that was at the top."

"Did you take your mistress for one of the young, or for one of the old birds, sirrah?" demanded his questioner sternly; and the little foot patted the carpet with increased force.

"An it please you, Madam Bellenden," answered the man, still without the slightest discomposure, "as I was getting up to the top of the wall, I heard a voice, which I believed to be that of my fellow servant, Mrs. Kitty, though I could not hear well enough, to distinguish what was said, and I became aware that some one was ascending a ladder on the garden side. Believing it was Mrs. Kitty, in an idle frolic I suddenly darted up, and caught hold of her."

The little foot patted more vigorously than ever, and the beautiful face grew a shade or two darker in its expression. Mary Bellenden seemed to hesitate; but she was only forming a determination. The man was perfectly respectful; his affectations seemed reserved for the servant's

hall, and there was nothing in his manner to belie his statement. His catechist, however, seemed far from being satisfied.

"Is it usual with you, when you are bird's nest-ing, fellow," she asked in the sternest manner, she could employ, "to commence your proceed-ings by a performance on the flute, varied with the singing of a love ditty?"

The little foot did not proceed at quite so rapid a pace, and the expression of the fair owner's countenance changed from indignation to curio-sity. The man, however, did not immediately answer. Indeed, he looked as though he did not comprehend the question. It was repeated with increased severity of manner. At last with a steady countenance, and in a way perfectly re-spectful, he said: "I humbly beg pardon, but surely there must be some mistake."

"None at all, fellow, none at all! I heard both the song and the instrument," said Mary Bellenden, very sharply.

"An it please you, Madam Bellenden," answered the man with an unaltered look, "save the Jew's trump, which I once played upon, with scarce any skill, I know nothing of music; and in all my life I never could sing so

much as might suffice, for a chorus of ‘Derry Down.’”

The little foot grew much more quiet, and the pretty face wore an expression of wonder, that thrust out all the indignation. Her friend, however, was far from being satisfied, even by so decisive an answer. Nevertheless, she laboured under the difficulty of having no means of disproving it. She fixed her gaze upon James; but James bore it unflinchingly.

“Mark me, sirrah!” she exclaimed, sharply, “mind what you are about. Another such a liberty with your master’s daughter, and your livery shall be torn off your back, and your impertinence cooled in the nearest horse-pond. Kneel down, and ask her pardon.”

“No, dear Mary, there is no occasion,” said the now pacified young lady. “Pray, send him about his business. I don’t want to hear anything more on the subject. I beg he may leave the room.”

“Kneel, fellow!” was the stern mandate of her more experienced friend. Without another word the man walked to the place where his young mistress sat, and knelt by her chair; not on both knees, but, as though he could not avoid his

natural coxcombry appearing, he placed himself in a somewhat too studied attitude for the occasion. The indignant beauty shrunk back, but as she did so, could not help giving a hurried glance towards the suppliant, which completely convinced her, he was much better looking than she thought it was possible for any footman to be.

The expression of Mary Bellenden's features were now anything but stern. She seemed to regard the position in which she had placed the two persons before her, as particularly diverting, but whether her amusement was at the expense of the mistress of the mansion, or her domestic, we cannot say. Not a word was spoken by either party, for the culprit seemed as if he could not find words sufficiently expressive to ask his pardon; and neither of the beauties attempted to interrupt his reflections. At last, as though he could not resist the impulse to indulge in the second hand airs and graces, he had played off with such effect on his fellow servants, he began :

“ Fairest of thy sex !”—

“ What the devil’s this ?” suddenly exclaimed a familiar voice; and all turning to the spot

whence it proceeded, to their astonishment and no slight embarrassment, beheld the Brigadier, who had entered the room unperceived.

The footman was on his feet in a moment, and met the angry and bewildered stare of his master, who looked from him to his daughter, and from his daughter to him, as though he hardly believed the evidence of his own senses.

"What in the name of Heaven does all this mean?" he thundered out.

Mary Bellenden came forward. There was mischief gleaming out of her very sparkling eyes, as she approached the bewildered Brigadier, his embarrassed daughter, and the astonished culprit, who possibly would rather have had his master remain in ignorance of the accusation that had been brought against him.

"I am sorry to tell you, Brigadier General Lepel," said his fair guest, striving to assume a grave aspect, "that your appearance here is quite *mal-à-propos*. You have disturbed the course of justice."

The Brigadier looked puzzled, his daughter gave a look of earnest appeal to her schoolfellow, and James seemed as if he would have felt a great deal more comfortable out of the room.

"*Ma foi*, the fact is, I had detected this fellow in the act of purloining some of your plate, and just as you were coming in, he had gone upon his knees to your daughter, and was praying for mercy as it was his first offence, and if he were given up to justice it would be the ruin of himself, and the disgrace of his family."

Had a thunderbolt fallen in the midst of them, it could not have excited more astonishment in all her companions than did this announcement. The supposed robber gazed on his accuser as though his ears must have deceived him; the young lady looked with reproach not unmixed with alarm at her friend; whilst the Brigadier glanced from one to the other with an expression of countenance in which rage, mortification, and wonder seemed struggling for the mastery.

"Can it be possible!" exclaimed he, as soon as he could find words; "has Petersham Manor been harbouring a house-breaker? Could you have had the audacity, rascal, to plunder a Brigadier General? Here Rackstraw! John Coachman! Sandie! Pompey!" he cried at the top of his voice, ringing at the same time a hand-bell that lay on the table. It so chanced that these worthies were close at hand, for they answered

the summons immediately, rushing in together with alarm in every face, as if they fancied the house was on fire.

“Strip the Lepel livery off this scoundrel!” exclaimed the Brigadier, with every symptom of being in a towering passion, “and then give him into the hands of the constable. Hanging’s too good for him.”

All except Pompey hurried to do the bidding of their master, and he did nothing but stand at the door and grin, apparently intent upon shewing his teeth to the very last in the set.

“Stop, Brigadier!” cried Mary Bellenden, “I insist upon it you do not take the matter out of our court. The criminal is in our custody, and before I acknowledge his guilt, you must allow me to examine him apart. He may probably have accomplices, and I may be able to induce him to confess when their appearance may be expected.”

“Very true, Madam Bellenden,” replied the Brigadier, who had long made it a point never to dispute the will of a lady. Then added to his domestics: “You may retire to the next room, where you can be in readiness, when required. I

must learn from my daughter how this intolerable villany came to be perpetrated."

The servants took their departure ; Sandie particularly loath to lose sight of a person for whom he had already contracted a considerable amount of ill will. As they left the apartment by one door, the Brigadier retired with his daughter by another.

Mary Bellenden looked to see that both doors were closed, and then signed for the criminal to follow her to the window. It might have been thought that so youthful a female would scarcely have liked being left alone with a man whom she had just charged with a crime affecting his life ; but so far from exhibiting any trace of fear, her beautiful features were lit up with the true spirit of mirth, in which by the way, no slight degree of mischief evidently mingled.

As for the presumed criminal, save a slight degree of annoyance, he seemed scarcely at all impressed with the disagreeableness, much less the peril of his position. The lady was the first to break silence, which she did not do, however, till she had satisfied herself that she was not likely to be overheard ; then going close up to him, ap-

parently much to his surprise, she addressed him in a low voice to the following purport :

“ Philip Dormer, your disguise has been penetrated.”

“ Stab my vitals, Madam Bellenden !” exclaimed the other, “ if you did discover me, there was no reason for your playing me such a scurvy trick. I am the first of the Chesterfields who ever took to the profession of house-breaking.”

“ *Ma foi*, so you are, I have no doubt,” observed the young lady, mightily pleased with her companion’s chagrin, “ and I believe you are the first of your family, who ever put on another man’s livery ?”

This was a home thrust, and the gentleman so felt it ; for he sagaciously held his tongue.

“ Philip Dormer,” she continued with as grave a face as she could assume, “ I am obliged to tell you, that you are in a very disagreeable predicament. Stealing in a dwelling house—”

“ Curse me, Madam Bellenden, what’s this you say ?” exclaimed the assumed footman with an air of dignity which completely broke down her gravity.

“ Stealing in a dwelling-house by a servant is a hanging matter,” observed she, “ and I do not

see how you are to escape so just a punishment."

"Stab my vitals, but *I* do," he replied with emphasis, "I never dreamt of depriving the Brigadier of a straw."

"How are you to prove that?" she inquired quickly, "the accusation brought against you, whatever you may say and do to the contrary, will in the first place lead to your taking up your residence in anything but comfortable quarters, in the county jail."

"County jail, Madam Bellenden! My father will soon put a stop to that."

"Mighty good, Sir; but as you are sure to be treated as an impostor, any communication with my Lord Stanhope would be out of the question. You would be obliged to lie in prison till your trial came on, which might not be for the next six months."

"Cursed unlucky! Deucedly provoking! What the dickens could have induced you to play me such a scurvy trick?"

"*Ma foi*, nothing but a wish to turn the tables, on you, Philip Dormer, and you will say this has been done most completely, when you are in snug quarters in Kingston jail."

"On my honour, Madam Bellenden, this is intolerable. Deuce take you and your jail too ; you are carrying your jest too far."

"I rather think you will find it carried a good deal farther. I protest to you, I doubt very much it will stop till it comes to Tyburn. There is one way left you to escape the very unpleasant position in which you find yourself."

"Ah, indeed ! then I shall be vastly obliged to you to tell it me."

"*Ma foi*, it is merely to make me acquainted with your purpose in having recourse to your present disguise, and getting surreptitiously into the house of Brigadier General Lepel."

"Purpose ! faith what purpose could I have beyond an idle frolic ?"

"I know your frolics ; but this adventure is the result of no idle frolic I am convinced. However, it is high time I put an end to this conference, and give you up to your impatient friends outside, who are so anxious to pay you every attention on your way to prison."

"Prison !—stab my vitals, Madam Bellenden !"

"Dear now ! I must tell the Brigadier I give you over to the civil power to be dealt with as

the law directs. I dare say they will find you some sort of conveyance to Kingston, when they have placed on you, for better security, the usual handcuffs."

"Handcuffs! I tell you I will never submit to such an unheard of indignity."

Mary Bellenden made a movement as though about to summon the Brigadier.

"Positively this is too bad of you!—but I suppose I must tell!" he exclaimed hurriedly.

"There is no help for you. You had better not attempt to deceive me or to withhold anything. Let me know all, and let me know it quickly; and I'll promise to get you as easily out of this extremely awkward position, as I have got you into it!"

"Well, that's civil of you, positively. Stab my vitals, I don't know for which to thank you most —making me out a pilferer of paltry forks and spoons—or freeing me from the consequences of such an infamous accusation."

"You are too good. If you hadn't been discovered in the house under such very suspicious circumstances, there would have been no possibility of fixing on you such an accusation. But we are losing time. Tell me at once what

brought you here, and how you contrived to obtain your present position in the establishment."

"Well then to be honest with you, I was sent here by the Prince of Wales."

"I thought as much."

"He is mighty curious to know what sort of a person is young Madam Lepel, as there is some talk of her being attached to the suite of his Royal Highness's consort."

"The Prince wished to know whether she was likely to please him as well as the Princess?"

"Egad you've hit it, Madam Bellenden. He wished me to observe the young lady as closely as possible, without betraying myself or my mission. So finding t'other day, in the course of my inquiries, that a footman was wanted, with the assistance of Pompey, our Prince of Darkness, whom I well bribed, I took upon myself that character, in which I easily established myself in the house; and by his doing the principal duties of my office I managed to pass for a very creditable member of the establishment."

"Did the Prince commission you to serenade your master's daughter by the side of a garden wall?" inquired the lady, with a most provoking

air. The question appeared rather difficult to answer, and the assumed footman looked a little unprepared for it; but just at this moment the Brigadier and his daughter re-entered the room.

“*Ma foi*, was ever such a stupid mistake, Brigadier!” exclaimed Mary Bellenden, approaching her host with well-feigned concern, “I protest to you I thought the man had bad intentions; but he has convinced me, poor honest creature, that I was deceived. Dear now, I am quite shocked at the wrong I have done him. He is a very good sort of a person, I havn’t the slightest doubt, and has highly respectable friends. Such an accusation might be the death of his poor mother:—a worthy old soul, who washes for my Lord Mayor.”

An execration was about to burst from the lips of the high-born favourite of a Prince, at being given such an ignoble origin; but he possessed sufficient self-control to swallow his indignation.

“And his father,” continued the malicious beauty with the most intense enjoyment of the mischief she was causing, “who is well known as a sober and industrious chairman—or link-boy—which is it, James?” she suddenly inquired, turn-

ing round upon the disguised son of Lord Stanhope, whose rising wrath he was making immense efforts to keep down.

"Oh—ah ! yes, Madam Bellenden. Chairman, I thank you humbly," exclaimed Philip Dormer, struggling to keep up his assumed character ; then muttered to himself, "Curse me, if her impudence isn't unbearable !"

"Yes, as sober and industrious a chairman as any in Marylebone," repeated the lady with the most provoking gravity. "Was it Marylebone, or St. Giles's, James?" she asked, again turning to see the effect of her bantering.

"Oh, St. James's, an it please you, Madam," said the assumed footman, with no slight difficulty.

"*Ma foi !* St. James's, was it? Well, I am monstrously afraid he would never hold up his head afterwards. So, Brigadier, I must request you will not suffer this foolish blunder of mine to injure the young man's prospects, or disturb the peace of mind of his respectable parents."

The Brigadier was not so astonished at this sudden change in the opinion of his fair visitor as might have been anticipated, for he had been closely questioning his daughter, whose examina-

tion threw considerable doubt on the accusation. Moreover, the genteel appearance of his new domestic had very much prepossessed his master in his favour; for if there was anything which particularly influenced him in another, it was in the shape of that attention to dress and behaviour which he himself so greatly affected.

"I regret, James, this mistake should have occurred," said the Brigadier. "You need not think any more about it."

The pretended James bowed respectfully, and was about to leave the apartment when Mary Bellenden stopped him, and put a guinea in his hand.

"This will be an addition to your wages, young man," she observed, with the look of a patroness, "and will enable you to add something to the comforts of your honest parents."

"Stab my vitals, Madam!" exclaimed Philip Dormer perfectly unable to restrain himself at this new affront; but as the Brigadier turned suddenly round, having partly overheard this exclamation, he thought it best to defer his indignation, and made a hasty exit from the room;—so hasty that he nearly upset the butler, the coachman, the gardener, and the other members of the establish-

ment who had crowded to the door, where one of them had for some time been busily engaged taking a reconnoissance at the key-hole for the benefit of the rest.

They had evidently gained but an imperfect idea of what had served so completely to change the aspect of affairs, and on his re-appearance among them they regarded their fellow servant with a reserve very different to their previous cordiality. Mr. Rackstraw was more than usually stately; John Coachman anything but communicative; Mrs. Molly was sullen and snappish; Mrs. Kitty and Lucy sat at another part of the table, and conversed with each other only in whispers; whilst Sandie every now and then gave utterance to some pithy proverb respecting honesty being the best policy, that lost nothing, in his opinion, from the sarcastic tone in which it was spoken.

The only cheerful individual of the party was little Pompey, who exercised his features in the broad grin with a pertinacity that looked as though he knew no other expression of countenance; and when the caustic Sandie expressed some reflection about the necessity of every one locking up his things, who had reason to doubt

their safety, he burst out into such a laugh as to cause him to be called to order by the stately and taciturn Mr. Rackstraw,

Philip Dormer paid no attention to this evident disrelish of his society. He whistled with a vacant air, and sometimes drummed the table ; now and then casting a glance at his companions ; and was more amused than disconcerted at their studied avoidance of it. At last the ludicrousness of his position in being sent to Coventry by such associates overpowered his sense of the annoyance he had endured upstairs, and he gave vent to his mirth in laughter louder and longer than that of Pompey had been—which of course caused a fresh display of the little negro's very white teeth.

At this indecorum, the respectable butler frowned, the coachman hemmed, and the gardener gave the table a sharp thump with his fist. The assumed footman rose from his seat, and without paying the slightest attention to the men, addressed a suitable apology to the females for so forgetting himself in their company, which was expressed in a style that ought to have won respect from the rudest savages ; but Mrs. Molly deigned no other reply than a toss of her head,

and Mrs. Kitty and Lucy looked as though they had not heard a word of it. He then quitted the servant's hall.

"Couldn't have supposed it possible," observed John Coachman, looking after the supposed culprit with no slight degree of concern expressed in his honest features. "I shouldn't have thought there was a bit of vice in him. Never seed any animal as looked less to require a warranty."

"Looks are deceptive, John Coachman," was the pithy reply of the cautious Mr. Rackstraw.

"I know'd he was no good," said the indignant gardener. "Such skip-jack fine fellows are never to be trusted out of your sight, and are fit for nothing but to turn the heads of a parcel of weak-minded women-folk, who havn't the sense to respect a man as is honester and usefuller."

"Marry come up!" exclaimed Mrs. Molly, her red face turning to scarlet, "I'd have you to know, Mr. Cabbage-grower, I'm no more weak-minded than yourself, though I am a woman; and as for honesty, I shouldn't advise them to brag of it as sells their master's fruit unbeknown to him."

"Honester, indeed!" added Mrs. Kitty scorn-

fully, who also felt the insinuation. "Charging double for his seeds, isn't a bit better in my opinion, than making free with master's plate."

"And as for usefuller," joined in Lucy with a particularly contemptuous glance, "what use some people could be put to, I really can't pretend to say—unless it be as a scarecrow."

Poor Sandie knew of old, it was a hopeless matter to attempt to answer either one of his opponents; nevertheless, the charges now made against him, and the laugh that was raised at his expense, exasperated him extremely. He was about to retort when he thought of the odds against him, and prudently held his tongue.

"For my own part," added Mrs. Molly, "I can't help saying I pities the young man. Nobody knows what temptation he might have had, that is to say provided he took any thing; for it ain't quite clear to me as he did, though I *is* weak-minded."

The last words were given with especial emphasis, and a look intended to annihilate her fellow-servant. Her observation brought to the recollection of all, the want of anything like proof of the imputed dishonesty of the new footman, and this led to one or two observations made in his defence.

Mr. Rackstraw, with his customary prudence, hoped James would be able to clear his character. John Coachman ventured upon an anecdote, shewing the facility with which false charges might be made against respectable upper servants, particularly coachmen ; and the women one and all thought it a burning shame, so well behaved and genteel a young man should have had his good name taken away. Sandie dared not venture to express his thoughts, but he was fully satisfied that hanging ought to be the fate of such an empty coxcomb, as his opponents were so ready to befriend.

As for Pompey, he had slipped out of the room unobserved, therefore there was no way of judging how he stood affected towards the person, whose merits and demerits they were so busily discussing ; but had they seen the grin on his ebony face, as he was at that moment assisting to divest Philip Dormer of his livery, preparatory to that gentleman's taking his departure from Petersham Manor, they need not have been in any doubt as to their dusky friend's sentiments.

Notwithstanding that the majority of the Brigadier's establishment were more nearly agreed as

to the honesty of their new associate, the offence with which he had been charged sunk too deeply into their hearts to be readily removed, and the evening passed off very heavily. Such was the state of things below stairs, but upstairs very little of the same gloom prevailed.

The delight of Mary Lepel, on hearing who she had got disguised in the house, was unbounded. She seemed as though she could never tire of expressing her wonder, that the handsome, gay, and accomplished Philip Dormer, should have sought to obtain her acquaintance in so singular a manner. She never once thought it necessary to recollect that he was attached to her bosom friend. Her first adventure now assumed a very different aspect to what it had, when her romance received so rude a shock, on the supposed discovery of her menial admirer. She remembered with peculiar satisfaction, that throughout *Le Grand Cyrus*, there was no instance of a heroine being attended by a lover disguised as her servant, who serenaded her on the flute, and sung delightful songs concealed behind a garden wall. Then she thought if some of her schoolfellows knew it, how astonished they would be; and debated in her mind whether she ought not to invite her intimate associates, Sophy

Howe and Fanny Meadows, expressly to tell them of her extraordinary good fortune.

In all this exultation, the Brigadier's daughter was not without certain feelings of disquietude, as to how she should behave to her disguised admirer, so as not to excite the suspicions of her father or of the servants. There seemed to be a good deal of danger and difficulty in the case, and she was incessant in her applications to her more experienced friend, as to what she should do.

Mary Bellenden, who had told her dear friend only just as much as she thought proper, laughed at her fears and referred to her Parisian reminiscences for numberless similar cases ; at the same time cautioning her that it was a mere frolic of Philip Dormer's such as he was being continually engaged in, so that she ought not to think any thing of it. She was fully convinced that now he was known, especially as the discovery had been attended by such disagreeable circumstances, he would remain but a very short time in his present quarters ; but of this she said nothing to her dear friend.

The truth of her conjectures was soon made manifest ; for in the morning the whole house was in confusion. James had disappeared. As

the valuables had not been disturbed, and there was nothing missing, the Brigadier thought the young man had taken offence, at having been unjustly accused ; and in the servants' hall there began to lurk a terrible suspicion, that their ill used fellow-servant, unable to hold up against his disgrace, had gone and made away with himself. Mrs. Kitty almost immediately left her place ; her feelings had been so touched by the uncertain fate of the unfortunate James that she could no longer stay, where she had lived so pleasantly in his company.

CHAPTER VI.

GEORGE I. IN HIS CABINET.

This has often made me compare the virtues of great men to your large China jars : they make a fine shew, and are ornamental even to a chimney. One would by the bulk they appear in, and the value that is set upon them, think they might be very useful ; but look into a thousand of them, and you will find nothing in them but dust and cobwebs.

BERNARD MANDEVILLE.

ROYAL palaces are usually looked upon as the head quarters of refinement and good breeding, of elegance and luxury ; there all that ingenuity can devise, and unlimited resources procure, may ordinarily be found, striving to give to prodigality the aspect of good taste ; and whatever is most attractive in decoration, whether it belong to the chamber or its inhabitants, is called into requisition to confer on both a manifest superiority as far as regards appearance, to all other people and all other places.

A Court is ever regarded as the holy of holies, of the worldly, and ambitious ; and courtiers, as the tribe of Levi set apart for the performance of its ceremonies. There, personal advantages are insisted on as cardinal virtues, and a handsome style of dress is your only morality ; beauty therefore becomes a positive necessity, and dress a science, that deserves to be held a source of never ending study.

Among all the great potentates of Europe, the grace of the women and the dignity of the men who constituted the Court, were passports to favour no one thought of challenging. Long before the first quarter of the eighteenth century had been concluded, the influence of this ostentatious grandeur, and seductive beauty, was paramount in most of the principal capitals ; in that of Louis XIV of France, and of Augustus of Saxony, it was carried to an extent, that was at once the boast and the shame of the age.

But it was reserved for the monarch of England to possess a Court, where there was neither splendour, grace, nor dignity ; where there was neither domestic comfort, nor moral respectability ; where there was nothing but what offended the eye, shocked the ear, and disgusted every moral

and intellectual sense. The Elector of Hanover had been called from the government of a poor province in Germany, to take possession of the triple crown of England. It was not for his religion, because no one ever heard of his having any; it was not for his wisdom, for that was equally deficient; it was not for any personal gifts, because he was as repulsive in aspect, as he was undignified in his carriage. No, it was because he inherited from his mother a claim on the British throne, as the nearest descendant of the Stuarts, professing the Reformed Religion.

The Elector of Hanover was arbitrary, bigotted, avaricious, and profligate. To his English subjects, there seemed to be some mystery connected with his matrimonial existence, that intimated his consort had been got rid of in some peculiar unwarrantable manner; the story was one that seemed to belong to the darker ages, when lordly oppressors flourished in greater vigour than has been known of late years. The Elector of Hanover was also stupid, obstinate, passionate, and vulgar.

There was evidently some mistake in making him a king, for he had neither kingly tastes, nor kingly feelings; he neither looked like a king, behaved

like a king, nor thought like a king. With such a king the Court may be imagined : it was a representation of the thing, that would have disgraced a company of strolling actors. It was an undisguised exhibition of vulgarity, roguery, ugliness, depravity, and meanness ; it was not only a burlesque upon the ordinary appendages to royalty, but it was a caricature apparently expressly designed to turn such an institution into contempt. In this picture, the King and the principal ministers of his pleasure resembled Dutch representations of the temptations of St. Anthony, where the fair tempters possess features that are a complete antidote to any thing in the shape of the tender passion, and the saint seems as susceptible of any such emotions as the well painted pitcher in the foreground, which is the only thing in the crowded canvass, the spectator is likely to be satisfied with.

George I. seemed out of place in the palace of St. James'. He appeared in his own person to realize to the spectators, two personages familiar to all who were acquainted with old English sports—the Abbot of Unreason and the Lord of Misrule ; but though we neither like the King, nor the favourites male and female who composed

his Court, they belong to our story, and we must do the best we can with them.

We, therefore, without further introduction, place the reader within the palace of St. James' in a lofty apartment hung round with pictures, mostly portraits of the Stuart family, from such able painters as Vandyke, Sir Peter Lely, and Sir Godfrey Kneller. The furniture of the room was extremely rich in crimson velvet, embroidered in the most splendid manner ; nevertheless, a slovenly air seemed to pervade every thing, from the ill hung curtains at the windows, to the misplaced chairs against the wall.

There was a profusion of ornaments of every description on the richly gilt tables ; many matchless enamels, some exceedingly rare vases, china ornaments of the most delicate beauty, costly gems, and the choicest specimens of goldsmith's work ; but every thing seemed in confusion, out of place, and jumbled together without taste or order, as if the possessors were ignorant both of their character and value.

A large Chinese screen stood at one part of the apartment, as though defending from the cold air or the glances of the inquisitive, a particular easy chair, bearing the royal arms of England worked

in gold, with a table placed near it, or some person, who occupied the one and made use of the other.

The individual seated in the chair was an elderly man plainly dressed, and still more plainly featured. He wore the usual heavy wig of innumerable curls ; but it failed to confer dignity on a countenance, particular only for its want of refinement. Beetling brows, shaded eyes, in their general expression as dull as those of a dead fish ; the lower part of the face was vulgar and sensual, and marked with wrinkles at the corners of the heavy mouth, indicative of distrust and apprehension.

The ordinary look was grave even to sternness, changing frequently to suspicion ; but the more careful observer might have noticed in the features a wild, uneasy expression, that spoke of a mind disturbed by some secret disquietude. The whole face was without a single gleam of intellect ; it gave evidence neither of heart nor of mind ; it seemed to belong to some member of the animal kingdom, as ignorant of human knowledge as incapable of human sympathies.

The form was as ungraceful as the countenance was unprepossessing. Physical power had been

given at the expense of symmetry, and broad shoulders, large extremities, short body, a protruding stomach, and thick legs, seemed rivalling each other which should contribute the greatest share of vulgarity to the general effect.

At a glance it was easy enough to perceive that the individual seated so clumsily in that splendid *fauteuil*, within one of the most magnificent apartments in the palace of St. James', was every inch *not* a king. Nevertheless, he boasted of being monarch of three kingdoms ; and, much more dear to him, was sovereign of a considerable German territory. Yes, for although the snuff-coloured suit did not indicate any very high degree of rank, the broad ribbon across his chest, the star at his breast, and the band below his right knee, pointed him out as George I., by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland and Ireland, and Elector of Hanover.

King George sat with his legs crossed under his chair, his head bent forward, and his dull eyes staring vacantly at the fire—for though the summer had scarcely departed, a blazing fire was in the grate. There were many papers on the table, but all in confusion, notwithstanding they were

of vast political consequence, and that some affected human life.

The King it was evident had quite forgotten he had such important business to attend to ; his thoughts were elsewhere—he was oblivious of kingly duties—he had completely lost sight of his new kingdom. The royal mind had wandered back to scenes that had been unconscious of such dignities. Memory had carried him to the one sunny spot in the gloomy wilderness of his Past : that spot so rich in bloom, so green in verdure.

The angelic face, whose smiles gave it all its sunshine, again shed her hallowed influence over his threshold ; the young creature whose affections he had gained by means so unworthy, made his home that perfect Eden, which exists only in woman's devotion. But that Paradise too had its serpent, and as the crafty features of her first and bitterest enemy obtruded upon his reminiscences, the royal visionary had sufficient sense of good in his dull and sluggish nature to feel disturbed ; and as if to divert his thoughts, although there was a tremendous heat from the grate, he began to poke at the fire with startling vigour.

This action roused him out of his reminiscences of the brief felicity he had been allowed to enjoy in the well remembered Herenhausen palace of his beloved Hanover; and he changed his position, glanced uneasily at the contents of the table, looked at his watch, and then rang a silver hand bell. The summons was immediately answered by the entrance from the ante-room of two individuals of swarthy features, large mustachios and beards, black as jet, eyes as full of cunning as of fierceness, dressed in magnificent turbans, and costly Turkish dresses.

Their sudden apparition might have caused a suspicion to enter the mind of the spectator, that he was in Constantinople instead of in London; for it seemed altogether out of nature that a Christian monarch should be waited upon by Infidels. Nevertheless, he was in the English metropolis, though these swarthy personages were genuine Mahometans.

Mustapha and Mahomet had been taken prisoners by the King many years back, when he held a command in the Imperial army, then engaged in a war against the Turks; since when they had been employed by their captor in various capacities, in which their freedom from Christian

scruples was an advantage, and were now holding the post of Pages of the Back Stairs and confidential attendants on the person of their royal master, together with various other honourable employments, such as spy, informer, parasite, counsellor, and broker for the sale of government appointments, which they had discovered to be equally profitable.

Indeed there was very good reason for believing that Mahomet and Mustapha possessed so much influence with the King, that either of them had more power in his hands than all the English ministers put together; and with a sagacity that reflected credit on their black beards, they were not slow in perceiving the advantage to themselves that might be made to accrue from it.

“Mustapha!” said the King in German, “who waits?”

“The English nobleman, Stanhope, please your Majesty,” replied the Turk, in the same language, after making a humble obeisance to his master in the Turkish fashion.

“Any one with him?”

“The English nobleman, Townshend; and the English Minister of State, Sir Robert Walpole.”

The King uttered a German execration of considerable length and intensity.

“These men are always disturbing me. I cannot be troubled with their long speeches and longer faces, about the ominous state of the nation. Let them be told I cannot grant them an audience this morning.”

Mustapha, making another humble genuflexion, withdrew, with his face turned towards his master, till he had backed himself out of the apartment. Mahomet remained quietly where he had at first placed himself; standing erect, with eyes fixed upon his sovereign, ready to gratify his slightest wish, from simple mendacity up to the most daring assassination. For some time, however, the King either did not observe him, or did not think it necessary to call his services into requisition.

His eyes were fixed on the fire, and he was again lost in deep reverie; but an unwelcome remembrance of the handsome and gallant Count, whom his vindictive enemies had pursued till they slaked their vengeance in his blood, once more disturbed the agreeable current of the royal ideas, and with a wild, threatening glance, the King moved himself uneasily in his chair.

“Mahomet, what have you learnt about the Prince?” at last he observed, as if for the first time conscious of the presence of his attendant.

“The King’s humble slave has heard much,” replied the Turk, with the proper salutation, and with as grave an aspect as ever became a Mussulman. “The Prince has rode in the park, has gone to the play, has written letters, has received visits from his principal friends, has held much confidential talk with his chamberlain, and has made love to three new English beauties, one of whom is the lady in waiting on his honoured consort.”

“Fool!” exclaimed the monarch, fiercely; but if fool he was, it was merely after the fashion of his parent, who had exactly in the same way—however completely he now contrived to forget it—neglected a fair and virtuous wife, to intrigue with the first woman who would listen to his addresses.

“Moreover, your Majesty has to learn from the lips of the humblest of your slaves,” continued the man, “that the Prince is believed to be engaged in some secret enterprise. There is much mystery; many closetings; words let drop of more than ordinary import, and an air of triumph

in his Royal Highness's features that seem to point to some action about to be done, from which the most perfect success is anticipated."

"Idiot!" cried the King, with increased bitterness. "He is ever intent upon running his worthless head into dangers from which he cannot withdraw it. He must be closely watched, and his principal associates dogged, to ascertain where they go to. See that it be done, Mahomet."

"The King's will is the law of his slave," answered the subservient infidel. "It has also been stated to me, from a trustworthy source, that the Prince has spoken disrespectfully of his Sovereign and parent, declaring him to be—"

"Say on!" thundered out the King, finding his swarthy attendant hesitate. "What new ribaldry has he dared to utter?"

"I tremble to repeat it to your sublime Majesty," said the Turk.

"Omit it at your peril!" shouted the King.

"'A pig-headed old fool,' Sire?" added the Mahometan, cautiously edging back from his royal master as he noticed his glaring eye, and livid face; "'with as little feeling as sense,' may it please you, my most worshipful Lord and Sovereign, 'and with just such ideas of governing as

might lead you to become a tyrant to your family, and a slave to your parasites.' ”

It is believed that the whole of this statement respecting the Prince of Wales was a fabrication, invented by those whose interest it was to foster the ill-feeling that existed between father and son ; of which inventions these favourite attendants were the ordinary channels of communication. The Prince was not very careful in his expressions, and entertained most unfilial sentiments ; but whether such words had or had not been uttered by him, they produced all the effect expected from them.

The King burst out in one of those appalling fits of rage, which of late years had been much too frequent with him ; his face became of a purple hue, and his mouth worked convulsively ; his eyes gleamed with an unnatural ferocity ; and clenching his heavy fists—the lace ruffles that ornamented them could not take anything from their clumsiness—he poured out a volley of curses in the German language, in words so long, and so dissonant, that in their utterance they must have broken the teeth of any one less used to them.

It is impossible to convey an idea of the innumerable picturesque epithets that burst in

an impetuous stream from the royal mouth, or give an adequate conception of the denunciations that rushed like an overwhelming avalanche from the same source. The King, however, had a stock of such flowers of rhetoric not to be matched by any of his royal brethren :—no, not even by that peculiarly abusive Sovereign, his son-in-law, the King of Prussia.

Mahomet watched his patron's passion with an unflinching gravity that shewed he had become somewhat familiarised with such explosions. He looked on as steady in his features, and as stiff in his drapery, as though he had been but a well modelled figure of wax.

"Let him be watched," cried the monarch, fiercely. "Note all well who come and go. A thousand devils! Had I but another son I would teach him better conduct. I would make him repent his insolence. I would—"

Here commenced another burst of unpronounceable, as well as of unreasonable hatred, which was evidently the tail of the storm, for the gloom in the King's saturnine countenance, seemed breaking off, and his savage glances became again dull and spiritless.

The wily Mussulman saw the change, and with

his invaluable experience was prepared to take immediate advantage of it. He had done his duty to those who paid him well, and now sought to avail himself of an opportunity to perform a still deeper duty he owed himself. The firm of Mustapha and Mahomet, ever since they had been established in England, had carried on a traffic, the profit arising from which their brethren in Asia could never have surmised. They had traded with a capital which must have put them to very little inconvenience in the management, large as it was, for it consisted of impudence, lies, and cunning. In their long experience of their royal master, they so thoroughly knew how to take advantage of his follies and weaknesses, that on their arrival in a country where all who sought his favour were strange to his person, they immediately commenced selling their services to whoever chose to apply to them ; and the singular extent of their agencies was only to be equalled by the contradictory nature of their several purposes.

It is quite impossible that any Christian should have possessed that happy indifference to objects which these Turks exhibited in their various transactions with the multitude of their clients. They

received bribes from foreign ambassadors to betray their King ;—they were equally well rewarded by the King to mislead the foreign ambassadors ; the King's mistresses feed them, to keep them acquainted with the transactions of the King's ministers ; the King's ministers feed them better to put them in possession of the intrigues of the royal mistresses ; they were paid spies employed by the father to watch the son ; they were no less well remunerated informers for the son against his parent. The leading parties in the interest of the Pretender had made it worth their while to keep them informed of the sayings and doings of him whom they obstinately continued to call the Elector of Hanover ; and the great promoters of Protestant ascendancy saw equal reason to hold them in their pay in expectation of early information from the friends of "the Chevalier."

No philosophers ever learned such practical philosophy as was displayed by these well known personages ; they so well combined the inapproachable art of doing everything, with that equally valuable one of doing everybody. Then the rogues looked so respectable in their beards ; so dignified in their turbans ; so honourable in every article of their infidel costume.

The simple applicants for Court patronage to whom these things were unfamiliar, could not avoid being influenced by the impression that such great trowsers must indicate very great men; —their confidence in such imposing garments might have been lessened had they known that in his own country the highest dignity the hook-nosed Mustapha had ever attained, was that of attendant on a public bath; whilst the martial-looking Mahomet, before, in company with his associate, he had quitted the City of the Sultan to war against the Franks, had been satisfied with the humble emoluments of a Turkish barber.

Mahomet waited with his customary air of reverence, till the last ebullition of the King's passion had subsided. He did not speak. He had become too great an adept in the etiquette of palaces to venture to say a word without having been addressed; but he made a movement that attracted the King's attention from the dreary reverie into which he had again been lost.

"Have you any further communication?" inquired he in a careless tone.

"If your slave might presume to speak, great King," answered the other, with that oriental recurrence to forms and phrases that had been so

familiar to him in early life. "An honest and loyal subject seeks to be your Majesty's purveyor of wines."

"Let him possess the office," said the King, without giving the applicant a thought.

"The King's goodness is inexhaustible," exclaimed the Turk, with his customary salutation; "it is a well that hath never failed. May the generosity of my Lord the King long continue to be the refuge of the deserving; and emboldened by such condescension, if the King's slave might presume to recommend a worthy, estimable, and industrious artizan, who aspires to be tailor to the royal household?"

"Let the man have what he wants," answered the King in the same careless manner. This fresh concession gave rise to a few more flourishes, and a few more recommendations; all of which were agreed to without the slightest demur:—the King never troubling himself in any instance to ask so much as a single question as to the competency and respectability of the parties for whom his Page of the Back Stairs was applying.

George I. did not like trouble; and then the King was well aware that he was not in a position to know whether such persons were or were

not worthy of their recommendation, and that the less he inquired into their fitness, the less was he likely to be deceived.

The dark eyes of the sinister looking Mahomet acquired additional brightness with every success he achieved ; and when his list of clients had been gone through without the slightest variation in the result, their brilliancy became extraordinary. But his business with the King of England was much more comprehensive. Favouring the views of roguish tradespeople was a trifling matter : he had nobler constituents, and he was not the man to neglect their interest, when there could not be a doubt he was also advancing his own to an amazing extent.

Mahomet was a profound master of his art. He had served a long apprenticeship to dissimulation, and had all the resources of bamboozling at his fingers' ends. He never failed to make the best use of any opportunity he could get, to advance the business of those persons who had chosen to place confidence in him; therefore, he presently commenced proceedings on behalf of the King's mistresses, of his ministers, of his son, and of the foreign ambassadors ; giving to each, with an admirable sense of rectitude, their due

importance, until all these delicate matters having been disposed of, he felt upon him the strong conviction that he had done his duty; and the very pleasant assurance in so doing of having earned an extremely handsome sum in ready money.

The King, during this colloquy had once or twice changed his position;—had even looked at his watch, and had rose from his chair to stir the fire; but he seemed to think better of it, for he returned to his seat, as if he preferred amusing himself by paring his finger nails with a pen-knife, which occupied him for the remainder of the time the conscientious Mussulman was advancing the interests of his employers; all which period his Majesty contented himself with putting a few questions when something in any way aroused his attention, or expressing himself either commendatory or mandatory, on the points brought in review before him. The Monarch then put an end to the interview, by commanding his Page of the Back Stairs to send Mustapha to him. Mahomet received the command with an air of the most profound respect, and with a dignity that would mightily have astonished his

old customers in Constantinople, he retreated backwards out of the apartment.

The King was again alone ; but never was he less alone than in his solitude. He reclined in his luxurious chair, and fixed his eyes on the fire ; but they saw nothing of the bright cheering flame that met their gaze : they beheld only the face of a beautiful and sorrowing woman, who was pining in hopeless wretchedness, a close prisoner in a remote castle in Germany.

There surely is an omnipotence in innocence which defeats the objects of the vile and the tyrannical. At least so felt the powerful King, as notwithstanding her strict and secure captivity, and the legions of spies and guards who surrounded her night and day, to prevent her sad story becoming known, he could not but confess he felt her influence even in the seclusion of his own cabinet.

He was lost in a reverie, staring on the flaming coals among which he fancied he beheld the tearful eyes and pallid features of the victim of his tyranny, when the monarch was startled by the entrance into the cabinet of the stout Mussulman whom he had dispatched some time

previously to dismiss his ministers. Poor men ! surely they had fallen on evil times when, while seeking the Sovereign on affairs of pressing emergency, they were denied an audience, and summarily sent about their business, till the King was at leisure, by a rascal who neither of them could have seen in his house, without entertaining reasonable apprehensions for the safety of the plate-chest. But they had served their apprenticeship to their new King, and therefore with a praiseworthy patience, on hearing the unceremonious intimation of the royal will, quietly took their departures, leaving word they would repeat their visit in a couple of hours, as they had pressing business with his Majesty.

“Who waits ?” was again the query of King George ; for the entrance of either of his Turkish attendants uncalled, always denoted some one applying for an audience. The fierce-looking Page of the Back Stairs made his salutation.

“ Illustrious Lord ?” exclaimed he, “ I am desired to state that the Herr von Sauercraut, the master of the royal kitchen, craves an audience on affairs of great importance connected with his office.”

“ The Herr Sauercraut ! What on earth can he

want with me?" exclaimed the King in evident surprise.

"Illustrious Lord, the master of the royal kitchen will only tell his business in the King's ear," replied the Mahometan gravely.

"Let him enter."

No sooner was the command given than the highly respectable Mr. Mustapha backed himself to the door, and in the lapse of a few seconds he entered with a very short square backed man, with more corporation than was sufficient to prevent his seeing any part of his legs. He possessed a good tempered jolly face, in which the eyes and nose were very much sunk—a round bullet head, set off by a short wig; and was dressed in the court fashion, very handsomely embroidered, with ruffles and sword; so that the master of the kitchen was able to take his place in the Mall with the best gentleman in town.

The Herr von Sauercraut advanced into the King's cabinet making a succession of bows, that proved at least his possessing more flexibility of back than strangers would have given him credit for; his honest features all the while impressed with the strongest feelings of reverence and awe.

"Good day, Herr Sauercraut," exclaimed the King to his master cook, who was an established favourite.

"*Von* please your Majesty," replied the little man with great emphasis. "Herr *von* Sauercraut."

The King, though a man of solemn turn of mind, could not refrain from smiling at the importance which his old domestic attached to the aristocratic prefix to his name.

"Well, Herr *von* Sauercraut," said his Majesty with emphasis as marked as his own, "what was your reason for requesting an audience?"

"Please your Majesty I wish to resign," answered the master of the kitchen with the air of a martyr at the stake.

"Resign, man!" cried the King in genuine astonishment—for the idea of one of his countrymen giving up the very profitable occupations his succession to the throne of England enabled him to bestow upon them, appeared incredible.

"Yes, please your Majesty, I wish to resign."

"Fellow, have you lost your wits? Have you grown so fat you can see no more of your own interest than you can of your shoe-buckles? I

could not have believed there was such a block-head in all Germany!"

"Please your Majesty, I am well aware of the extraordinary sacrifice I am about to make; and be assured that as a true Hanoverian it could only be with extreme reluctance that I am about to give up a good place in this rich kingdom, where there is such plenty to be got, with such exceedingly little trouble in getting it. But I entertain scruples of conscience, please your Majesty."

"Scruples of conscience, sirrah! Scruples of conscience because you are enabled to make a rapid fortune with little trouble? Why the man's raving."

"The fact is, please your Majesty, that the dishonesty in the royal kitchen has risen to such a height that it can no longer be tolerated where there is any due regard for decency. In our beloved Hanover, that there was some picking and stealing I will not deny; but then it was done with something like moderation. But in England my fellow servants, who in their own country were satisfied with robbery in a modest and respectable way, plunder in a manner that makes

one's hair stand on end. From morning till night, please your Majesty, the royal kitchen seems turned into a den of thieves, each vieing with the other in stealing the stores.

"I am too true an Hanoverian to be foolishly repugnant to any reasonable acquisitions that bounteous Heaven puts in one's way in other countries; but the wholesale plunder which has for some time been going on around me astounds me, and I fear this rich country under such a system, must soon become as impoverished as our beloved Hanover.

"I think it my duty, please your Majesty, to make known this awful state of things, and request your Majesty's gracious permission to retire to your Electorate to spend the little competence which under Divine Providence, by industriously availing myself of opportunities for adding to my gains at the expense of your Majesty's excellent English subjects, I have been enabled to obtain."

The King listened to this complaint with an air half puzzled, half amused. That peculation was going on to an immense extent in the palace, his ministers had long made him aware; but why this should be made known to him by one of the

depredators, he could not understand. There was no precedent of a Hanoverian ever before having been dissatisfied with the plundering propensities of his compatriots,

George I. certainly felt some difficulty in disposing of so unusual a case; but at last he seemed to understand the true nature of the application, and the natural stolidity of his countenance gave way before the idea that entered his mind of its extreme absurdity.

"I am much moved, Herr von Sauercraut," replied the King, as gravely as he could, "at the very uncomfortable position in which you seem to be placed; but let your consolation exist in the knowledge, that this fine country of England will bear an extraordinary amount of pillage—more indeed than would destroy a dozen Hanovers, inclusive of the provinces of Bremen and Verden. Herr von Sauercraut, I recommend you to add to the fortune a generous Providence has allowed you to accumulate, at the expense of these wealthy people, by staying where you are. If you find your fellow servants engaged in the work of plunder, steal too; and," he added in a significant manner, "Herr von Sauercraut, be sure you steal enough."

The face of the master of the kitchen brightened up amazingly at this gracious speech ; and with a smile of intelligence, and a profusion of bows, he lost no time in backing himself out of the royal presence, a happier man by a great deal than when he entered it.

Scarcely had this highly respectable personage taken his departure, when the vigilant Mustapha returned, and after his customary genuflexions, announced that the principal ministers of state craved an audience on affairs of the greatest importance. The impatience of the sovereign, at this announcement was very striking ; the gleam of good humour that had lighted up his heavy countenance at the close of the interview with his master of the kitchen, faded entirely, and his face resumed its wonted sullenness. At this moment, the Turk murmured some observation respecting the probability of the ministers having something of importance to lay before the King relating to Hanover. No sooner was the hint given, than it was acted upon. With a more serene aspect, the German King gave permission for his English ministers to enter the apartment ; and presently as their names were announced,

there entered Lord Stanhope, Lord Townshend, Sir Robert Walpole and Mr. Secretary Craggs.

The ministers approached their sovereign with the air of delinquent school boys going up to their pedagogue to receive the reward of some such heinous transgression as robbing an orchard ; they filed up solemnly in their full wigs and handsome court suits, making due obeisances as they approached. The King kept his seat, and recognizing them as they presented themselves, held out his hand to each in turn, who respectfully kneeling, raised it to his lips.

As the early portion of the conversation which ensued was of a very political character, we do not think it sufficiently interesting to report it. We need only state that the subject under discussion was Hanover, whose interests were to be regarded at any and every sacrifice to those of England. Much was said about the different states that composed the Electorate ; of Zelle and Calenberg, of Lüneburg and Lauenburg, and a good deal of expected additions to it, such as Bremen and Verden ; and various plans were considered for their protection, improvement, and prosperity.

Once or twice, one or other of the Ministers

attempted to turn the conversation to subjects, in which the interests and happiness of England were involved ; but it was soon found to be a hopeless affair. Hanover was the only theme : the most important questions of foreign policy were treated with perfect indifference, when the Electorate was not to be considered in them ; and what related to government at home was regarded as quite unworthy of consideration, simply because Hanover had nothing to do with it.

Sir Robert Walpole gave an intelligent look to his colleagues, and then boldly sought to create a diversion. It appeared that the real object of the desired audience was very different from the ostensible one. The ministers of the crown had become so deeply impressed with a sense of the wide-spreading mischief caused by the dishonesty of the King's German favourites, male and female, that they had determined on making a representation of the evil, and a proper remonstrance against its continuance.

It was amusing to observe the diplomacy of the ministers in bringing the subject before their august master. How cautiously they avoided giving him offence, by any expression or allusion, such as the case really required ; how tenderly they

passed over the delinquency of his beloved Schulerburg ; how slightly they dwelt on the dishonesty of his dear Kielmansegge , though if these women had their deserts , they would have been forced to change their fine apartments in the palace , for bare standing room in the pillory ; and with what extreme considerateness they mentioned the wholesale and impudent system of plunder which the German attendants on the King , from the chief favourite , Count Bernstorff , to the very humblest scrub in the kitchen , had commenced almost as soon as they arrived in the country .

But their diplomacy availed them little . The Elector of Hanover , in becoming King of England , had not entered into a contract to make his Hanoverian subjects abstain from following their natural inclinations ; and those who had ventured to accompany him to his new territories he felt bound to protect in the indulgence of such inclinations , however greatly his English subjects might suffer .

This idea developed itself in full force as he listened to the courtier-like statement of Sir Robert Walpole , and the monstrous interference with his royal prerogative apparent in this pro-

ceeding, caused his harsh countenance to assume an aspect more and more severe. What was the use of being King, he thought, if he could not reward his faithful followers; and it was a gross offence in any person to interfere with the industrious efforts of his enterprising countrymen to make their fortunes.

The King very sharply took his ministers to task for presuming to remonstrate with him, on a state of things so necessary to the welfare of his faithful Hanoverians. He did not deny their dishonesty; but it was evident that in the royal mind honesty was a thing of which he had no definite conception. He perhaps had had no experience of it in his Electorate, for he seemed to doubt it had any existence in his kingdom. He even went so far as to assume that Sir Robert Walpole and of course his colleagues, sold their influence at Court in the same business-like manner for which his German mistresses and attendants were so remarkable.

It was in vain for the ministers to have disclaimed such a proceeding. Sir Robert did attempt to say something respecting the necessity of integrity to public men, which Lord Stanhope thought proper to echo, and which Lord Townshend varied

by a representation of the more imperative necessity of sovereigns discountenancing whatever tended in the slightest degree to lessen public confidence. Mr. Secretary Craggs then took up his cue and alluded to the growing popularity of the Pretender, and the rapidly increasing discontent in Parliament and elsewhere, arising from the waste of the public treasure, and the traffic in offices of trust and emolument, by foreigners.

These observations only served to increase the royal displeasure ; the King was convinced he was exceedingly ill used, and under that impression he very quickly got into a passion ; spluttering out a torrent of long German words anything but complimentary to his audience ; but as only one of them could understand what his Majesty said, and as he did not choose to hear, the offensive expressions passed unheeded.

King George ended the interview by dismissing his ministers, and though each came forward to shew the usual mark of respect, before he bowed himself out of the cabinet, the King sat in sullen dignity, making an unintelligible muttering noise, much like what might be expected from a caged bear, with whom some unwarrantable liberty was being attempted.

Sir Robert and his colleagues had departed, and the King was left to the enjoyment of his own reflections, which invariably afforded as much gratification to his solitude as the night's solitary reflections to a criminal about to be hanged in the morning. The same pale accusing face presented itself, the same sense of insecurity filled his soul, the same conviction of his own folly as well as criminality took possession of his thoughts ; till unable to bear these torturing reminiscences and impressions, he suddenly started up from his chair with a mighty effort, called loudly for his attendants, and on their entrance announced his intention to visit the apartments of Mademoiselle Schulenburg.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HEIR IN AMBER.

Pretty ! in amber to observe the forms
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms !
The things we know are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil they got there.

POPE.

We must now beg the reader to follow us from the King of England's cabinet, to the dressing-room of the heir apparent. It was situated in a different part of the same palace, the windows overlooking the gardens and the park. A very handsome chamber, with rich cornices and mouldings, superb hangings, rare pictures, costly furniture, and most valuable decorations of every description suitable to a Prince's dressing-room.

The same negligence and want of taste was however quite as visible here as in the apartment

described in the last chapter. It was encumbered with all sorts of incongruous things—hunting-whips, fowling-pieces, swords, pistols, fishing-rods, walking-sticks, mirrors, pipes, snuff-boxes, books, fiddles, flutes, pomade jars, and bottles of strong waters, seemed mixed up with various articles of dress; stockings, shoes, boots, breeches, coats, hats, in almost endless number and variety placed on chairs, tables, cabinets, and in fact wherever room could be found for them.

At a small gilt table near one of the windows there sat a young man rather short of stature, and somewhat pinched in features. The expression of his countenance would have been repulsive, had not a sense of good humour, mixed with animal enjoyment visible in the lower part of his face, redeemed in a slight degree the narrow forehead and unintelligent eyes that made his ordinary look so very ordinary. There certainly was no one feature that could be styled handsome. But though plain, there was a deal of good nature in the countenance, that gave it a great advantage over the dull and harsh physiognomy of his father. For be it known that the portrait we have been attempting to sketch is that of the Prince of Wales.

His Royal Highness was wrapped in a silk dressing gown, and wore a night cap of the same material, the only finery he seemed disposed to wear—for he usually affected a citizen like plainness in his dress; writing materials were before him, near which were a silver candlestick and extinguisher, and an empty Sevres cup and saucer of the most beautiful pattern, which evidently had not long since contained chocolate.

He sat or rather reclined back in a cumbrous arm chair, looking steadfastly but laughing unconstrainedly at a person standing before him, in a sky blue velvet suit laced with gold, who notwithstanding he now bore the appearance of a man of fashion, might with very little difficulty have been recognised as the *ci-devant* genteel footman of Brigadier General Lepel, whom we beg to re-introduce to our readers with his proper name and office, as the Honourable Philip Dormer, one of the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and believed to be very much in his confidence.

Now it deserves to be known that the Prince, though a much more amiable character than his father, was scarcely less obstinate or less opinionative. He had sufficient sagacity to see that the

King was despised by his people, and his filial love was far from being sufficiently strong to prevent his endeavouring to take advantage of it. He had suffered too much and too often from his father's tyrannical temper, to feel either respect or affection for his person ; there was another and deeper cause for his dislike of his progenitor, of which the reader will be fully informed in the course of this narrative.

There was not much feeling in the Prince ; but there was some, and the wonder is that after the pains that had been taken to fill his mind with the most hateful errors and prejudices, he should possess any.

The shallow intellect and the still shallower heart of his father had been cunningly filled with all sorts of suspicions and apprehensions. He was made to doubt even that his son was indebted to him for his existence, of which a certain handsome Count had the reputation. This was one great source of his hatred to his heir—a hatred which was industriously fanned by malicious gossips, and industrious mischief-makers, who earnestly strove to make the mutual ill-feeling of father and son, conducive to their own interests.

The Prince had sufficient wisdom to see that some deference to public opinion was necessary in the reigning family ; and although he was very far from being likely to make this deference in his own case as perfect as it ought to be, he was desirous of establishing in his own personal attendants, a state of things as opposite as possible to the repulsive appearance and contemptible conduct of those of the King.

One of the worst features in the Prince's disposition was the little attention he cared to bestow upon the seventh commandment ; but unfortunately this was a vice so common among the Princes and nobles of Europe, that under the name of gallantry it was looked upon as an accomplishment worthy of being classed amongst the fine arts. Even in this, something redeeming might be found : he was too clumsy a seducer to be very dangerous, and too good natured to allow of any of those infamous schemes for the destruction of virtue, which were so common at the period.

He was listening, evidently greatly amused, at the narrative of his handsome and well-dressed Gentleman of the Bedchamber, who was making the Prince acquainted with his adventures at Petersham Manor.

" And so this Lepel is bootiful. Eh, Dormer?" said the heir apparent in imperfect English,—in using which, by the way he contrasted favourably with his father, who would not take the trouble to learn a word of the language of the people he had been called upon to govern."

" Stab my vitals, your Royal Highness," exclaimed Dormer in a seeming ecstasy, " I have seen nothing so young and fresh, and so extremely lovely in all my travels;—may I perish if her very look is not poetry."

" Boetry! I like boetry mineself, vid plenty of bassion and bathos, and all de oder tings you read in der poetry of Mr. Bope."

" Ah, Mr. Pope never wrote anything so beautiful in his life as a smile from Mary Lepel. I vow it is beyond poetry or painting either."

" Beyond bainting! but I will shudge for mineself; I will see Madam Lepel vid mine own eyes. Is she more bootiful as Mrs. Howard?"

" There is no comparison, your Royal Highness, strike me dumb!"

" No gombarison you zay! Dat is all vat you call vudge. Der Howard is der most agibble womans as I see in England. Has she such goot gomplexions as der Howard? — has she such

goot veatures?—has she such exzellent brobor-tions?"

" May I perish if Mary Lepel's complexion is not an exquisite, an incomparable combination of lilies and roses. Her features are redolent of youth and innocence; and her proportions are such as can only be rivalled by the master-pieces of Grecian art. Stab my vitals!"

" Den she must be a Veenix!"

" She is a Phœnix undoubtedly, your Royal Highness."

" Vell I vill see her vid mine own eyes: but does she not abbear mosh too young looking, tink you, for to take her blace vid de oder vemales as shall attend my wife?"

" I cannot but consider such a position exactly suited to her. Positively the very thing!"

" I vas tinking how vonderful her booty must abbear ven she gome to Court to be blaced peside dat bair of dam antiderluvian grockodiles der Schulenburg, and der Kielmansegge."

At this droll reference to his father's mistresses, the Prince laughed very heartily, and of course his Gentleman of the Bedchamber not less so.

" But vat you say of der Bellenden?" inquired his Royal Highness.

Philip Dormer had suffered considerably from coming in contact with this young lady ; but he harboured no malice. He gave a faithful description of her personal attractions ; her extreme vivacity ; her lively conversation ; her graceful deportment ; and her numerous accomplishments.

“Dis is von greater Veenix dan de oder,” observed the Prince at the conclusion. “Your desgrition make my mout water. But I vill zee her vid mine own eyes. Dere most be vat you call vudge, in all dese vine wonderfule tings you say of dese two young beobles.”

“If there is a word of fudge, your Royal Highness, may I perish !” replied his Gentleman of the Bedchamber, scarcely attempting to conceal a smile. “I doubt I do the young ladies justice.—Pon my life, they are vastly handsome. I vow and protest, in the name of Venus and all the Graces, you might search throughout England and not find two more lovely creatures.”

“Inteed !” cried the Prince, with a look of much humour. “Do you pretend to zay, dat dey shall be more handsome den my fader’s bair of dam antiderluvian crockodiles, der Schulenburg, and der Kielmansegge ?”

"Oh! I would not dare to compare them with such incomparable beauties.—Stab my vitals!" said Philip Dormer, joining in his royal master's ready mirth.

"But you have not told me noting of Madam Howe, and Madam Meadows?" observed the Prince. "Who knows, berhaps, dere is more Veenixes!"

"Your Royal Highness shall determine," replied his companion. "I made my way to Isleworth, where General Howe resides, and watching my opportunity, got into the house in the disguise of a poor soldier wounded in Marlborough's wars. The young lady heard I was in the kitchen, and sent for me; and her father and mother being gone to town, as I very well knew, she took upon herself the duties of mistress of the house. She was careful I should have plenty to eat and to drink, and encouraged me to relate my history. And a pretty history I made of it. Stab my vitals! if I did not prove myself as fine a soldier as ever drew sword, it was no fault of mine. The young lady was mighty free with her tongue, and appeared anxious to make me feel perfectly at home."

"Dat is all ver goot, Dormer; but vas she as

bootivul as some beobles have said?" inquired the heir apparent.

"I will describe her; and I can do so with some minuteness, as I regarded her with particular attention," said his informant.

"Vat an apominable zly rogue! Dere vas not no need vor you to be so bartiklar. But tell me, how bootivul she vas."

"I found Sophy Howe possessed of a commanding figure, with finely shaped shoulders and bust, and monstrous pretty hands and feet. May I perish, if in shape she looked not a perfect Juno; but her face was that of a Venus, and a most seducing Venus too! Stab my vitals! I never saw such full dark eyes, or so rich a complexion; and the mouth was so ripe, so rosy, and so voluptuous."

"Mein Got, vas dere ever such bainter of a bretty woman's portrait! I shall be in love vid her bevore I see her. I shall lose mine aevctions to dis charming desgription. I shall be ravish vid de mere talk of her ribe rosy mout. But is dis exquist young greeture von dat shall veel de bowerful bassion of love in her bretty liddle heart?"

"I vow her beauty is of that character which

breathes of passion in every feature. Her glance is thrilling; her smile melts the very soul."

"Ah, you zly rogue! I tink your soul been melting till, as people zay, dere is all der vat in der vire."

The Prince laughed at his own joke, and his attendant, though disclaiming being enamoured of Madam Howe, joined cheerfully in his Prince's good-humour.

"Is she more bretty as de Montacu?—She is vat I call most agribble—most charming—most vascinatin' of all der bretty womans dat come to my vife."

"Lady Wortley Montagu positively possesses many and great attractions; but I protest to you, the beauty of Sophy Howe is far more seductive."

"Go on vid your story, mine vriend."

"I took my departure as soon as I had completed my observations; and carried with me her good wishes, and some sterling evidence of the young lady's generosity. After inquiring my name, she said at parting: 'Farewell, Tobias Bastion, I am sorry the General is not at home, for he would have rewarded an old fellow-soldier handsomely; but the next time you come by, I

hope you will be more fortunate.' 'Egad I considered Tobias Bastion to have been sufficiently fortunate in having escaped the lynx eye of the General; but I merely made my acknowledgments, and went my way."

"Berhaps you vos not mosh to plame. But vat did you do ven you vent to de oder young womans?"

"I had great difficulty in getting admission to Madam Meadows. She was living with an old maiden aunt at Twickenham, and their notions were so mighty rigid, that the appearance of a man in their cottage would have caused not less commotion than an earthquake. But when I have a duty to perform to my Prince, if I pay any heed to minor obstacles, strike me dumb!"

"Dere is noting so goot, and so brober, as your devotion. I am mosh beholden to you. But broceed."

"At last, by monstrous good fortune, I ascertained that a French master was required by the old lady to finish her niece's education.; and getting the necessary recommendations, I presented myself as Monsieur Le Grand. I suppose I represented the Frenchman admirably, for after a formal examination touching my

religious opinions, and moral sentiments, by a most solemn looking old woman, who scrutinized me from top to toe through her spectacles, I was engaged to improve Madam Meadows in the French language."

"Vat a Brotean berson! Mine Got, you vould as readily turn Jew, or babist, or der teufel himself, if tings looked likely enough."

"Your Royal Highness does me too much honour, stab my vitals!" replied the Gentleman of the Bedchamber, with a courtly bow. "I was shortly introduced to my pupil, whom I found prodigious starched and formal for so young a person, yet a beautiful little angel in face and figure. Tall, slim, with fine eyes and light hair. Perhaps the least seductive of the four; but undoubtedly an elegant and beautiful young woman, who would be an ornament to your Royal Highness' Court."

"Oh, ah, yes—perhaps I must also have dis young vomans to attend my wife. She vill do to helb put de old grocodiles out of gonzeet of dem-selves; but how did you get rid of your bubil?"

"May I perish if she did not get rid of me, your Royal Highness."

"Got rid of you! Is it possible? Exblain your-zelf, mine vriend!"

" At the close of our very first lesson, I ventured to pay her a compliment, which she received with so frigid a look, a spectator might have fancied I had just put some gross affront upon her. The same day I received an intimation from the aunt, that her niece declined receiving any more French lessons; and, stab my vitals! if she did not reprove me, for the unwarrantable freedom I had taken."

" Dat is goot joke," exclaimed the Prince laughing heartily, " excellent goot joke, bositively. You vas sent apout your bizness vid von vlea in your ear, eh, mine goot vriend? You must have peen too barticular in your attentions, or I should zay in paying your gompliments to der young lady. But I must zee dem mine own zelf. I must zee if they be der beerless creatures you have said."

" A better opportunity cannot present itself than the one now available. By the visit to Mary Lepel of her three school-fellows, the four beauties, your Royal Highness has thought worthy to become attendants on the Princess, will then be under one roof, and you can either see them there, or meet them whenever they take their customary walks in the neighbourhood."

" Dat is drue, and I will take der virst obbor-

toonity to see dem broberly ; but now subbose you and I go to my vife's abartments. I must bay my respect, and all dat sort of ting."

The Prince of Wales summoned his valet-de-chambre ; and in a short time, with this person's assistance, a handsome wig was made to take the place of his Royal Highness's night cap, and a sober looking coat replaced his silk dressing gown, whilst his loose slippers gave way to shoes with gold buckles ; then with his sword at his side his hat on his head, and a cane in his hand, he went whistling out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PRINCESS RECEIVING MORNING VISITS.

**Formed to gain hearts that Brunswick's cause denied,
And charm a people to her father's side.**

TICKELL.

CAROLINE Princess of Wales was apparently the most quiet and unobtrusive creature ever discovered within the precincts of a Palace. She had enjoyed the benefit of being educated at the Court of Prussia, under the superintendence of one of the most accomplished women of her age ; and while she possessed a mind of a superior order, and attainments rarely met with in royal females, it is not extraordinary that she affected an inclination for the abstruser branches of knowledge, and indeed for many scientific pursuits, which were then rarely sought after, by individuals of her sex.

The times were not favourable for learned

women. Female influence had been exhibited on a grand and most imposing scale in the capitals of France and Saxony ; but it had not its source in intellectual superiority. The old Electoress Sophia, the mother of George I, was one of the very few royal females, who about the close of the seventeenth century, assumed the distinction of a “ blue-stocking.” Her pretensions, however, were far from being as exalted as her rank ; and though she did not want the high opinion of several eminent scholars she patronised, it was only by contrast with the very unintellectual personages who constituted the Hanoverian Court, that she could be styled a learned lady.

There is reason for believing that it was from the Electoress, the Princess of Wales, whilst domiciled with her after her marriage, contracted her learned propensities ; for in her society she met several distinguished scholars, and continually heard conversation of the most edifyingly philosophic character ; and when she arrived in England with her husband, the company she was at first thrown into at St. James’s, in which her dull father-in-law, his ill-educated mistresses, and his somewhat weak-minded son, were the principal personages, made her sigh for the more congenial

associates, she had been used to converse with under the auspices of the old Electoress.

The Princess of Wales discovering how uncomfortably she was placed, aspired to create a Court of her own. She sought to obtain her wishes with equal cleverness and tact. She tried to attach to herself and her husband whatever talent she could come in contact with ; no matter in what direction it displayed itself, and with this design in view she assumed an extraordinary capacity for all sorts of knowledge. Nothing seemed to come amiss to her ; the most abstruse points of philosophy, the most doubtful questions of divinity, the most difficult scholarship, arts, sciences, and manufactures, seemed to come to her as familiarly as though she had studied them all her life.

With these apparent predilections it is not surprising that the Princess Caroline should have been sought by all the rising divines, scholars, poets and men of scientific acquirements England contained ; and that to her judgment was submitted every discovery in astronomy, chemistry, or any other branch of study, as well as sermons, poems, critical essays, plays, and books of every description. Her tables were covered with new books, her rooms crowded with new aspirants for dis-

tinction. She soon found that there would be less difficulty than she had anticipated, in having a Court of her own ; still a great deal was to be done, to prevent suspicion in her father's mistresses or distrust in her husband.

The Princess carried on her proceedings with singular caution and prudence. To the King she was always extremely submissive and respectful ; to her husband she conducted herself as though she never interfered with politics, and nothing was so far from her mind, as to do anything which did not appear to emanate from him. The very idea for which the Prince took such credit—that of her possessing female attendants, taken from distinguished English families, who should be as remarkable for their beauty and accomplishments, as the foreign women about the King were for their ignorance and ugliness—had been started by her, though with her usual policy, she allowed it to seem to have its origin in a suggestion of her husband's. With the same prudence, she permitted the Prince to pursue his plans, of which she had early intelligence, without apparently taking the slightest notice of them, while she privately took measures to secure her own.

She was well aware of her husband's gallantries,

but never allowed them to trouble her repose. She had been long enough in the family to know the dreadful penalty her mother-in-law had paid, for attempting to check the coarse licentiousness of one member of it; and though the Prince was less disgraceful in his conduct in this respect, than his father, she doubtless saw nothing in his character to make her desirous of risking her liberty, from over anxiety about his affections.

She was good looking. That is to say possessed a German physiognomy that was far from being disagreeable; and her figure was at least majestic if not graceful. Her manners at this period were peculiarly winning—a womanly sympathy for every thing worthy of it, continually shewing itself; and her conduct as a wife was irreproachable. She won all hearts by her good feeling, and what is scarcely credible, notwithstanding his numerous infidelities, so well conducted herself, that she never forfeited her husband's respect, or diminished his admiration.

Such was Caroline, Princess of Wales, on that very morning with which we opened our chapter. She was engaged, in accordance with a Parisian fashion then coming into vogue amongst the dames of distinction in this country, in receiving

her morning visitors in bed. Her toilet had evidently been made most carefully, her head-dress being exquisitely elaborate, and such part of her night dress as was visible, a sort of robe of muslin of the most delicate texture, seemed admirably adapted to display her well developed bust to advantage.

The bedstead was placed in an alcove, hung with costly draperies of rose-coloured silk, richly embroidered, and very elegantly arranged ; a magnificent white satin quilt, with the royal arms and other devices worked in gold, covered the figure of the Princess, and the bed furniture, excepting the delicate satin pillows, and some portion of the dazzlingly white cambric sheet trimmed with very rich lace.

A silver rail that run along the alcove, guarded the royal lady from too close approach from the numerous visitors who pressed forward on such an occasion, to pay their respects and to share in the lively gossip with which they were expected to entertain the recumbant occupant of the alcove. Close to this barrier, leaning forward with an air of courtly respect, were several ladies and gentlemen, clad in the richest suits allowable for paying morning visits to a Princess.

It was a handsome and capacious apartment, redolent of the most delicate perfumes. Pictures of figures in a semi-nude state, from the seductive pencils of Rubens, Titian and Annibale Carracci, adorned the walls. A magnificent Turkey carpet was spread over the floor, and heavy but gorgeous draperies of velvet and gold, curtained the windows. Some beautiful marble busts of children, and small figures from the antique, stood on gilt brackets, whilst larger groups were to be seen on pillars placed in convenient corners.

The furniture was exceedingly rich ; the chairs, tables, cabinets, and mirrors of the costliest character of Louis XIV. The whole aspect of this apartment shewed how completely the magnificence of the French Sardanapalus had become naturalised in an English palace, where too, let it be remembered, the sovereign possessed about as much taste as his night cap ; but it must not be forgotten also, that its fair occupant did possess taste, and in her own quiet way was careful to have it properly established.

The Princess Caroline received company according to this French fashion, but received only select friends of both sexes, to whom she desired to shew particular honour, or whose society was

particularly agreeable to her. The persons present on this occasion consisted of several individuals, of whom some were in attendance on her Royal Highness, and the rest were casual visitors. Of the first the most conspicuous was a young and pretty woman, who stood close to the head of the bed, and to whom the Princess frequently referred, by styling her " My good Howard."

This was Mrs. Howard, a married lady, filling the office of Lady of the Bedchamber to the Princess, and according to general report was one of those fair Englishwomen who had the reputation of receiving the attentions of the Prince. The *liaison* was as well known to the wife, as to the husband ; but the former never allowed it to interfere with her appreciation of her too enticing attendant ; the Princess did, however, it must be confessed, sometimes make her Lady of the Bed-chamber feel her insignificance, notwithstanding the Prince's partiality ; but she did it in a manner, which none perceived.

On all occasions she seemed to regard her with more than usual affection, and, as the person most interested in the affair, treated her with much consideration, it is not to be expected that the lookers on should be more squeamish. Indeed it

was anything but the fault of the age to regard this sort of criminality too severely ; in too many instances vice in high places in a much more offensive form was permitted to pass without the deduction of a tittle of the respect paid to the station it disgraced.

Mrs. Howard was apparently of a very cheerful temper, with lively hazel eyes, and a remarkably seductive mouth. Her form was well developed, perhaps a little too full to be strictly beautiful, but it belonged to the type of womanly beauty with which Rubens seemed so thoroughly enamoured, and no doubt was very likely to entice a man like the Prince of Wales, whose tastes were not more delicate than his principles. Mrs. Howard's behaviour to her royal mistress was marked by a singular degree of devotion, as though by the most strict attention to her wishes, in other matters of duty, she desired to make amends for a departure from it in one important point.

The elderly gentleman in the claret coloured coat and a rare diamond ring on his finger, was the Duke of Devonshire—a courtier whose intimate acquaintance with the English Court had been of infinite service to the Princess of Wales. He was a great gossip, and what is more sometimes

an exceedingly agreeable one, full of pleasant anecdotes of interesting personages from the Court of Charles II. down to that of Queen Anne, and abounding in those conversational resources so pleasant to the sex that can make entertainment out of the most trifling materials, and furnish forth a delightful repast of scandal, ridicule, or inuendo, according to the humour of the listener.

Near him was another nobleman, his junior by some dozen years; but though possessed of less experience, he was not less a courtier than his neighbour. This was Lord Bellenden, the father of the young friend of Mary Lepel. Though in the prime of life, it was evident he had lived too fast for his constitution; it was equally true he had lived too fast for his fortune. The crows' feet about the eye, the sunken cheek, the puckered mouth, and the colourless visage, contrasted unfavourably with the clearer and better preserved physiognomy of the wealthier peer. Lord Bellenden had been extremely dissipated in his youth, and had made no improvement in his manhood. His frequent visits to the gaming-table had early impoverished him; nevertheless he had for a long time contrived to maintain himself in what in those loose times was considered a

respectable position, almost entirely by his superior skill in those fashionable games quadrille, whist, ombre, pharaoh, brag, and hazard.

Lady Bellenden had been dead some time, and as his daughter had just completed her education, his Lordship on her return to England thought something might be done with her more advantageous to his fortunes than either luck or skill at the cards. He knew the peculiar aspect of affairs at St. James's, and as far as the King was concerned, he was well aware there was but an indifferent prospect for her in that direction. Had she been as ill-looking as she was handsome, and as dismal as she was lively, he might have entertained hopes of her being properly distinguished there. Nevertheless if ugliness reigned paramount with the sovereign, he was sufficiently well informed to know, that under the auspices of the heir apparent such attractions as Miss Bellenden possessed would have full sway.

To the Prince of Wales he was well known. He now became constant in his attentions to the Princess, and had contrived, by taking unusual pains, to make that lady much pleased with his society. He had even ventured to speak of his daughter, and of her extreme desire to be pre-

sented ; and had hinted that should Mary Bellenden enjoy the good fortune of making a favourable impression on her Royal Highness, nothing could afford him greater gratification than that his daughter should have the honour of serving the Princess, in any honourable capacity for which she might be thought fitted.

To these complimentary speeches, the Princess of Wales made equally complimentary answers, encouraging his secret wishes in the most gracious manner, and making the most friendly inquiries after the fair candidate for her service. Lord Bellenden had not the least idea that the Princess, long before he ventured to mention the subject, was as well acquainted with his daughter's attractions and accomplishments as he was himself, and possessed a far more accurate knowledge of her disposition ; nor could he have surmised that the favourable way in which she listened to him, arose from the satisfactory report she had received of the young lady from her constant adviser in all such matters, his frequent companion at the bed-side of the Princess, the gossiping Duke of Devonshire.

The third person in the group possessed of a very dark complexion, with a somewhat reckless

expression, yet a handsome and commanding figure, well set off by his velvet coat and breeches, was Evelyn Pierrepont, Marquis of Dorchester. He was not an exclusive favourer of the heir, though found among the select few who were morning visitors to his consort; for he quite as frequently was seen at the unselect evening parties of the King.

It was the desire of the Marquis to be in favour with both, and his morning and evening visits he continued with equal punctuality and enjoyment; not without hopes that such well balanced respect would ultimately be of essential service to him. His zeal in favour of the House of Hanover was so far acknowledged, that he had a promise from the King to be raised to the ducal dignity, and the Hon. Wortley Montagu, who had lately married his daughter, the celebrated Lady Mary, was created one of the Lords of the Treasury.

The Marquis was a gay man of pleasure, a member of different convivial clubs, a frequenter of the opera; and though he had arrived at a time of life when such follies are usually put aside, he still endeavoured to maintain a reputation for gallantry, by keeping half a dozen mistresses, and continuing a tender intimacy with

nearly a score of other ladies of his acquaintance, whom he allowed it to appear, were anxious to be similarly at his devotion.

The daughter of such a man, who as early as at eight years of age, was nominated by him in a moment of drunken revelry, a member of the famous Kit-Cat Club, to the licentious members of which, she was immediately introduced, and who amid caresses, praises and hiccups drunk her health in bumpers, and admitted her claim to be on the list of the club, could not be expected to be a model of feminine propriety. She had not been married more than two years, yet the conduct of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, had begun to be the theme of much scandalous animadversion ; and among her innumerable admirers—for she had long continued the toast of the town—the Prince of Wales was considered one of the most favoured.

Let scandal say what it would, it was evident it produced no impression against her or upon her ; for there Lady Mary stood, in the gayest of the many gay dresses for which she was celebrated, with her handsome yet rather bold face, dressed in bewitching smiles, joining in the conversation with more freedom than any person present, and giving

utterance to witty remarks, that amused the whole circle, and delighted the Princess.

Lady Mary was a beauty, and had been a beauty long enough to get somewhat tired of the homage she had enjoyed. She was weary of flattery, and satiated with adoration. Her charms had been said and sung till every form of compliment had become common-place, and she longed for another sphere where she might feel some excitement in being worshipped. She had been so dosed with admiration ever since her childhood, that she felt so much distaste for anything approaching it, as to be in the habit of acting with perfect indifference to opinion.

This was often put down as recklessness; and the eccentricities in which she chose to indulge were attributed to a character lost to all sense of delicacy. In this the world too frequently did her injustice. She was much too careless of what she said and did: she was in the position of an absolute sovereign, who considers himself above opinion, and conducts himself as under such an impression; but Lady Mary was not worse than the mass of married ladies at that period, and in many respects better than those who reflected the most severely on her conduct.

After saying many smart things she carelessly directed her attention to the ornaments with which the apartment was profusely decorated, leaving the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Bellenden and her father, to entertain the Princess according to their own fancy ; and after amusing herself with examining the china figures, and the wax fruit, and the family miniatures that were placed about the tables, she took up a recent volume of Mr. Pope's poems, and quietly seating herself in a well-cushioned chair, prepared to read with as much indifference to the place in which she was, as she would have felt had she been at home. Court etiquette could not have been more completely set at nought ; but Lady Mary was a privileged person, and the Princess did not think it necessary to notice her eccentricity.

Lord Bellenden presently took his leave. He had scarcely departed when Lord Peterborough was announced, and there entered another of the gay spirits so characteristic of that age, who by their actions and their manners made it appear they never intended to grow old. His Lordship had been a soldier and a statesman, and in both characters had greatly distinguished himself : but

he was no less celebrated as a wit than as a man of gallantry. And now that he had lived at least fifty-six years of almost constant action, his spirits were still as high even to wildness, as they had been in the meridian of his hot youth.

He came forward, a tall man, very thin in figure, with a dashing look, clad in a military dress, a black wig tied behind him, and jack boots, which contrasted curiously with the court dresses of the other male visitors of the Princess. The Earl of Peterborough received a most gracious reception. His disregard of foppishness, notwithstanding his character for gallantry, was as well known as Lady Wortley Montagu's neglect of the customary ordinances of propriety; and received the same toleration. Even the long thick stick with an ugly head carved at the top, with which he had entered her Royal Highness's apartment, only raised a laugh from the Princess; which of course was echoed by her visitors, who knew his Lordship too well to be otherwise than amused at his bringing with him, into a lady's bed-chamber, such a formidable companion.

The Earl then told a good joke about his wishing to testify his loyalty, and knowing no better way to show it, than by carrying with him

the likeness of the person the King most delighted to honour. This hit at Mademoiselle Schulenburg increased the mirth ten-fold ; even the Marquis found it irresistible, despite of his anxiety to do nothing that should jeopardise his promised promotion.

Lord Peterborough then poured forth a quick succession of jests, that kept the Princess and her visitors continually laughing. One that seemed to amuse them most was his relation of a practical joke he had just played upon a poor dancing master, that shewed his love for this sort of mischief, and the recklessness with which he indulged in it.

Proceeding along in his chariot, the streets being very dirty from constant rain, his Lordship observed a long lank Frenchman in pearl-coloured silk stockings, most carefully and deliberately picking his way over the flags. The opportunity for fun could not be thrown away ; so the Earl called on his coachman to stop, flung open the door of the chariot, and drawing his sword, leaped out and ran after the man. The dancing master seeing a gentleman approaching in so menacing a manner, was taken with a sudden panic that made him totally regardless of his beloved pearl-silk

stockings. He took to his heels through the mud, followed by his pursuer as hard as he could lay foot to the ground. In a very short time the delicate colour of the Frenchman's hose was concealed under a mass of splashes; when the Earl sheathed his sword, and returned to his chariot delighted with the perfect success of his experiment.

At the conclusion of this anecdote the Duke of Devonshire left the apartment; immediately after which were announced the Duchess of Marlborough and Brigadier General Lepel. The stately old Duchess liked very little venturing as a mere complimentary visitor into a building, where but a few years back she had been more powerful even than the sovereign; and she had as little relish to pay compliments to any member of a family who, according to her notion, had slighted the great Duke, her husband; but she wished to serve the Brigadier, and though some thought she would have preferred accompanying him into the presence of the Pretender, she had promised to use her interest with the daughter-in-law of the Elector of Hanover to forward an object her old admirer had so much at heart, as

obtaining for his daughter the honour of being one of the Princess's personal attendants.

The Brigadier had made himself particularly elegant on this interesting occasion. He had on a new suit of rich velvet cut in the last fashion ; and he looked so fresh and so gay, as with all the devotion of a gentleman of the Court of Queen Anne he handed the Duchess towards the alcove, that if it were possible to find room on the walls of his house for another portrait of the Brigadier, a new one ought assuredly to represent him in his present satisfactory position, appearing at Court under the auspices of his venerated patroness.

As for the great Duchess, though in her secret soul she felt nothing but contempt for the whole family of Brunswick, and every step she took increased her disdain of every thing and every body about them, she marked her sense of the departures from established etiquette which she had noticed since she had entered the Princess's apartments by the most rigid observance of every ceremony exacted from visitors to royalty, when their admission was left to her fiat.

To see the old lady dressed out in the towering head-dress and stiff drapery of a former reign, sail-

ing in so stately a manner along the apartment, stopping at certain places to make the most profound reverences, yet from the expression of her proud eye, entertaining feelings diametrically opposed to all such ceremonies, was to behold something worthy of remembrance. She looked neither to the right nor to the left ; one comprehensive glance at her entrance which had taken in every thing—the unheard of indecorousness of the thoughtless reader, and the intolerable indelicacy of a bed-room reception—had sufficed to give to her mind a just conception of the whole scene. She recognised the apartment as the favourite sitting-room of her royal mistress ; and without bestowing any further notice of any thing or any person in it, she advanced with a rigidity of muscle an earthquake would not have disturbed, till she came before the Princess.

Her Royal Highness welcomed her stately visitor very cordially ; but this was far from producing the effect intended by it ; it was in the opinion of the old lady undignified, and she sat down the consort of the Prince of Wales as lamentably deficient in breeding. After having, with all the stiffness of ceremony, paid her compliments, and presented her friend—which she had

been permitted to do very much by herself, as the Earl of Peterborough and the Marquis of Dorchester had withdrawn from the rail as she advanced, to allow of her approach—she commenced an address worthy of being a speech from the throne, in which she mentioned the Brigadier's very proper desire to devote his only daughter to the service of her Royal Highness, and entered into a detailed catalogue of the young lady's qualifications for such a distinction.

The Princess listened more graciously to this intimation, than she had done to the one she had so recently heard from Lord Bellenden:—this may have resulted partly from the extremely favourable opinion she had heard of the young lady, and partly from a desire to propitiate so powerful a person as the Duchess of Marlborough. When the Duchess had ended, her Royal Highness expressed a profusion of thanks for the trouble she had taken in endeavouring to gratify a favourite purpose of hers; and turning to the delighted Brigadier, entered into an animated conversation with him respecting his daughter, of whose tastes, thoughts, and feelings, she appeared exceedingly well informed; and concluded a multitude of obliging expressions by intimating

a wish that Madam Lepel should be presented to her as early as possible.

The Duchess barely allowed the Brigadier to express his acknowledgements for such extreme considerateness, when she prepared to take her departure. At this moment the Earl of Peterborough joined them, and addressed the Duchess as an old friend, heartily and unceremoniously. The Duchess of Marlborough was one who never forgot or forgave an affront, and she remembered that the Earl had once, not only opposed the great Duke, her husband, but had paid court to her personal enemy, "Lord Oxford's abigail," the artful Mrs. Masham. The Duchess knew too well what was due to the presence of the Consort of the heir apparent, to express her feelings ; she allowed, therefore, nothing more to escape her than a dry expression of her thanks for the honour the Earl of Peterborough had conferred upon her. Then, without deigning any further notice to him, or to any of the other persons present, she paid her parting compliments to the Princess.

If the style in which the stately old lady entered the room had been a sight worth seeing, much more curious was the manner of her exit.

She held her person as upright as a dart ; and attended by the Brigadier, piloted herself out of the apartment with her face turned to the Princess, with a precision that might have been thought extraordinary, by those ignorant of the frequency with which she had previously performed the same manœuvre.

In the course of the next half hour many other visitors were announced, who gossiped, and went away, and then a message coming that the Prince of Wales awaited her Royal Highness in the reception-room, she graciously dismissed her company ; and summoning the attendants, whose duty it was to dress her, assisted by her “good Howard,” prepared for the business of the toilet.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FOUR BEAUTIES.

Up jumped Lepel and frisked away,
As though she ran on wheels ;
Miss Meadows made a doleful face,
Miss Howe * * *

LORD CHESTERFIELD.

THIS was a great—a joyous day, at Petersham Manor ;—at least it was expected to be a proud and happy one to its beautiful little mistress. It was the anniversary of her sixteenth birthday, and the Brigadier seemed disposed to make it as joyous for her as possible. With that object in view, a grand party had been invited to dinner, which she cared very little about ; but amongst the guests she had been allowed to invite her school favourites, who were to stay two or three days.

Mary Bellenden was still with her. She had

exhausted her stock of Parisian airs and graces ; yet not without producing its due impression on the Brigadier's daughter. When the accomplished young lady heard that there would shortly arrive two more of her less refined school-fellows, whose astonishment and envy she might excite, she greatly rejoiced. She would have been better pleased had she been allowed to dazzle the whole school, with the once dreaded Penelope Stiffandstern at its head.

To declare the truth, the simplicity of her young friend's character was becoming tedious to her ; her romantic disposition amused her at first, but the very trifling nature of the sources from which it was nourished, gave it too childish an air to suit the more experienced beauty. If it had not been for the genuine affection with which Lord Bellenden's daughter regarded her, that finished young lady would have long been thoroughly sick of her society. As it was, she made amends for her toleration of the daughter, by flirting with the father. The old beau was not insensible to such advances, and taxed his gallantry to the utmost to recommend himself to his fair young guest.

Mary Bellenden was well aware of the exer-

tions that were being made to get her favourably placed at Court, where she was extremely ambitious of going; but of her own destination Mary Lepel had no other means of guessing, than existed in the mysterious hints of her father, and the now encouraging prognostications of his honoured visitor, the great Duchess of Marlborough.

That stately old dame had latterly been very regular in her visits; and had every day she arrived, spoken more and more favourably of her. The fact is, the sweetness of disposition visible in the readiness with which the beautiful girl submitted to her most ungracious observations, had in some degree made tender the tough heart of the great lady; and she began to take a decided interest in her success. She had even condescended to be one of her guests on her birthday.

The Duchess, although become so favourably disposed towards the daughter of her old admirer, did not appear to regard her young companion with anything like the same consideration. Mary Bellenden had played off all her accomplishments;—every Parisian grace had been exhausted before the Duchess; but the old lady looked on

with a cold, contemptuous glance, which all the young one's vivacity could not change.

Lord Bellenden's daughter thought proper to resent this, with an air of studied indifference towards the great Duchess:—often entering into conversation with her friend, without the slightest reference to their stately visitor. The Duchess of Marlborough was too old a courtier to be disconcerted by such a manœuvre, and the only result was, a quiet display of the great lady's contempt, which provoked the saucy beauty still more.

This humiliating behaviour of their visitor made Mary Bellenden long for more congenial society; and the birth day of her friend came as welcome to her, as if she had been the person to whose honour it was devoted. When the chariot arrived which contained two other young ladies and their band-boxes, it was difficult to say who received them with most gratification, her fair hostess or her fair friend.

The visitors came early; they proved to be Sophy Howe, a lovely young creature, who possessed more audacity even than the all-accomplished daughter of Lord Bellenden; and Fanny Meadows, who was as reserved and quiet in her

demeanour as the other was free and daring. As soon as the guests had entered the house and had been presented to the Brigadier—whose reception was a happy mingling of the welcome that ought to be given to the youthful companions of his daughter, with the attentions due to their sex and beauty—they all scampered upstairs to the familiar chamber, where, amid a thousand references to the well remembered establishment at Newington Butts, they began to unburthen their mutual confidences. As all four persisted in making themselves heard at the same moment, it is quite impossible to convey the effect of their revelations; but nothing seemed to be said in vain, notwithstanding the little listening there appeared to be time for.

The new comers soon learned the romantic adventure of the fictitious footman; and they in their turns made their friends acquainted with the mysterious visit of the disbanded soldier, and the audacious conduct of the French master. The four young people then compared notes, and their description of the individual who had managed to obtain access to them, agreeing in many particulars, they one and all came to the conclusion

that Tobias Bastion, Louis le Grand, James Pebbles and Philip Dormer were one person.

This extraordinary discovery gave rise to a great deal of ingenious speculation respecting the motives of Mr. Dormer in employing such disguises. Of these, Lord Bellenden's daughter considered herself perfectly well aware; but she did not think proper to make known her information. The identity of the footman with the Prince's Gentleman of the Bedchamber had been established; and it seemed equally probable that he was the maimed soldier and the ill-behaved Frenchman; in short, with the shrewdest of the fair schoolfellows, there could remain no doubt of this.

The next subject of consideration was, what was to be done. There was a good deal of apprehension even in the laughter that arose amongst the fair gossips, whilst treating of this extraordinary attempt to deceive them. It was mysterious, thought Sophy Howe. Fanny Meadows and Mary Lepel hardly knew whether they ought to be most amused or most frightened. Lord Bellenden's daughter suspected the Prince of endeavouring to make a selection from the

most attractive young beauties in England, to amuse himself with as objects for the display of his gallantry, and began to entertain a strong suspicion that Philip Dormer had deceived her, when he accounted for his appearing in the house under such extraordinary circumstances.

"I vow and protest now," observed Sophy Howe, her fine full eyes kindling with mischievous animation ; "I am for open war against this Philip Dormer. I think he deserves monstrous little mercy at our hands ; and should he fall into them, the least he could expect is to be tossed in a blanket. Indeed, I strongly advise that for the tricks he has played upon us, we play one upon him, which shall bring him into our power ; and then, girls, we would have such rare sport in seeing his worship springing up into the air, cutting all sorts of indescribable capers, as with a vigorous pull at the four corners of a stout piece of Witney, warranted to bear a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, we sent him up again at every fall."

The schoolfellows laughed heartily at the idea ; and possibly under such a leader as the proposer of it, had Mr. Dormer ventured amongst them, he might have been placed in the ludicrous position, Miss Howe had described.

"I think it very shocking," said Fanny Meadows, in a more serious tone, "that such unpardonable deceptions should be suffered to go unpunished; it's monstrous! I am quite sure the man had some atrocious object in view."

"*Sans doute*, child, he had atrocious objects in view," answered Lord Bellenden's daughter, with one of the most effective of her Parisian gesticulations. "Men do not put on disguises to get into houses where there are very charming young women, which of course we must consider ourselves—"

"Oh, of course!" echoed Sophia Howe saucily, as she glanced at the long mirror.

"Without entertaining some wicked design," added Mary Bellenden. "*Par exemple*, there is no doubt he assumed here the part of a domestic, the more securely to carry out his villainous intentions against our sweet young hostess."

"Oh, the villain!" exclaimed the sedate Fanny Meadows.

"I only wish he had tried such intentions upon me," cried the high-spirited Sophy Howe, with a gay hearted laugh. "Footman or no footman, I would have had his ardour cooled in the nearest pond, where he might have found congenial fel-

lowship with the last litter of puppies that had there been disposed of."

"Positively, my dear Sophy, you are more daring than ever," exclaimed Mary Lepel, whose gentle spirit could not approve of such severe retaliation, for an offence she was half inclined to think excusable. "I am vastly concerned, I must own, that a gentleman of Mr. Dormer's noble family should have entered my father's house in a manner so derogatory; but I am inclined to regard it as an idle frolic, such as many young men of birth and fashion are engaged in every day."

"Of course, my dear," answered Sophy Howe, mockingly; "and in such an idle frolic he came to me, and in a similar harmless manner he went to Fanny Meadows. But then your opinion ought to be much more favourable than ours, for he serenaded you over a garden wall, which with us he never attempted, and I am inclined to think this mightily amiss in him. Had I been entertained with his touching tunes and his tender songs, no doubt I should have taken quite a different view of his case. I begin to think I have been shockingly ill used."

Much of this sort of bantering followed from

each of her attached friends, who could not have resisted such an attempt to raise a laugh at the expense of their young hostess. She had little skill to parry such a combined attack; but without intending it, Mary Bellenden caused a diversion upon herself, by indulging in a speech repeated in a manner so extravagantly French, that Sophy Howe burst out into a loud laugh.

“In the name of every thing ridiculous, what does all this mean?” exclaimed that young lady, staring at her dear friend with an expression of countenance, far from gratifying to the more thoroughly educated daughter of Lord Bellenden. “As I hope for a husband, when I look at you, I doubt you are Mary Bellenden, who used to find such a world of trouble in learning a French verb. I am almost spiteful enough to consider you some female monkey who has seen the world. Did any one see such a head-dress, or so strange a robe? Did any one see such outlandish grimaces and manœuvres? Why, child, your limbs are as restless as if they moved by wires, and being pulled by unskilful hands were all jerked out at once.”

“Ah, *ma chère*, you have not been in Paris!” exclaimed Mary Bellenden, with a sort of pity,

nevertheless in a slight degree put out by her friend's ridicule. "Had you received the advantage of finishing your education at the headquarters of the *beau monde*, you would know better how to appreciate those graces of manner, that must be invaluable to every well-bred woman."

"Dear now, is it possible?" exclaimed the other with well-affected astonishment, "I am wonderstruck!"

"Yes, Sophy," cried the gentle Lepel interposing for her friend, "our dear Mary has come home quite a Frenchwoman."

"I would rather not such an opinion should be stated of me," said Fanny Meadows gravely.

"It is all a matter of taste," exclaimed Miss Howe laughing. "Mary may have profited greatly by her French experience, but if all that Paris can do be to metamorphose one of the brightest ornaments of dear Stiffandstern's school into so bedizened and beshrugged an object as I see before me, why I cannot help thinking I have lost nothing by not finishing my education in France."

"I should like to have gone there vastly," observed the Brigadier's daughter. "I often

find myself wishing I had been as fortunate as our handsome friend."

"Depend on't there's no good breeding without a familiarity with the observances of the best French society," drily added Lord Bellenden's daughter. "It is a pity that the charms of our exquisite friend should be deprived of attractions so likely to set them off to the best advantage. But *ma foi*, how late it is!" suddenly exclaimed she, as she glanced at her watch. "We have been gossiping so long there is barely time left to dress for our friend's company. Let us make our toilet at once as quickly as we can."

The young beauties took the hint, and all proceeded to their dressing rooms, where we shall leave them engaged in the performance of those duties which to persons so graced by nature were very little required.

CHAPTER X.

A BIRTH-DAY PARTY.

The day is come, her ripened charms appear,
And Cælia closes now the fifteenth year.
The airy sylphs, her ministerial band,
Obedient take their delegated stand ;
To each fair feature give peculiar grace
And add new lustre to an angel's face.

ANON.

BUT how was the Brigadier affected by the arrival of this interesting day ? He was a model of Brigadiers. It is impossible to imagine anything more amiable in the conduct of an elderly gentleman than that which he exhibited towards his daughter and her youthful guests. He showed them his pictures, and his curiosities, not forgetting his gold sugar-basin and all the other beautiful specimens of ostentation with which he had surrounded himself. In particular he went through the vast collection of his own portraits, giving to

each its peculiar history, and dwelling on them all with that deep feeling of affection it was scarcely possible for the Brigadier to help feeling towards a personage so nearly connected with him as the interesting original.

Many were the pertinent observations made by his fair young friends, as the different objects were brought before their observation. Sophy Howe in particular having a word to say on every thing she saw, and Mary Bellenden making it an occasion for referring to every thing she had seen. But the extraordinary number of the likenesses of their friend's father, surprised them exceedingly. They could not exactly understand why one portrait had not been thought enough.

Neither of these young ladies was deficient in shrewdness. They detected the very obvious pride and vanity of their host, and they could have entertained no objection to give it a fair trial. They therefore flattered the foible of the old beau, and praised all they saw belonging to him, and delighted him with the earnestness of their appreciation of portraits, curiosities, tea-chests, and every thing their obliging host allowed them to look at.

The Brigadier grew more and more gratified

with his employment. His gallantry would have led him to derive no slight satisfaction in paying every possible attention to such beautiful young women; but as they were the most intimate friends of his daughter, and they had come to Petersham Manor to do honour to her birth-day, he felt bound to regard them with as much tenderness as he could afford to exhibit under such circumstances.

As the hour of dinner approached, the guests began to arrive thick and fast. They consisted mostly of brother officers, and brother courtiers of the Brigadier—persons of a certain influence and standing, whom he could not but be happy to entertain at his table. After putting away their superfluous apparel, they collected in the drawing-room, where their young hostess and her young friends had assembled in full dress to receive them.

It was a very grateful sight to see with what well bred ease the youthful daughter of the Brigadier welcomed her guests as they entered the apartment. Her youth and beauty, set off as they were by all the aids of dress then in requisition, told extremely in her favour. None could look

on her without admiration ; few admire without feeling some symptoms of a tender sentiment.

In an age when so much gallantry was afloat among both old and young, so exquisite a creature could not escape being the object of it ; but to her it came not as a mere lip homage from the idle, that meant nothing, or an animal impulse from the licentious, the meaning of which was not to be expressed, but as a sense of the respect due to woman in her purity, loveliness, and intelligence.

Among the company who arrived first came General Scroop Howe, a rigid martinet, whose soul was devoted to the machinery of the drill. He marched into the apartment as stiff as a ramrod—a tall, thin, dried up man, with his head in the air, and a glance at the company as scrutinising as he would have given to a batch of recruits turning out of barracks for his inspection.

He took no notice of his daughter, but proceeded straight to the Brigadier, by whom he was at once presented to Mary Lepel. He went through the ceremony very stiffly, and seemed as though about to demand where she had served,

and in what regiment—questions he had so frequently asked, that they came from him involuntarily whenever he was obliged to address himself to any stranger. He was a man of very few words, and those few were sure to relate to military matters. Other members of the same profession followed, possessing much the same stiff and pedantic characteristics.

After them came Lord Bellenden, who made directly to his young hostess, and overwhelmed her with compliments;—nodded to his daughter, requested to be introduced to her female friends; stared hard at Sophy Howe, and endeavoured to recommend himself, even to the more reserved Fanny Meadows.

The next name announced was that of Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, a man whose costume was more clerical than his countenance, for the latter was highly expressive of a tendency to good living, which a gouty leg corroborated. He came leaning on the arm of a very pretty modest looking woman, whom it was easy to see was his daughter. His Lordship entered with a graceful air, accosting the young ladies with a degree of freedom which would have been considered highly scandalous in a dignitary of the church a hundred

years later, and addressing the gentlemen with an air of familiarity equally unclerical. But Bishop Atterbury was a great favourite with both sexes, to whom he always recommended himself by his admirable social qualities, and the kindness of his disposition.

The next name announced was that of Mr. Secretary Craggs, a tall thin young man, of about thirty, whose handsome features made their appearance irradiated with smiles, and eloquent with condescension ; he was a perfect man of the world, could do anything, say anything, and deny anything, with the most perfect good humour, and good breeding. After paying his respects to his host and hostess, to whom he made his congratulations in the most expressive manner, he addressed every body in the room in turn ; and without appearing to treat any individual with partiality, he endeavoured to make an impression on all, that he was the most agreeable minister they had ever met with.

Very close observers might have remarked, that on his approaching the Bishop, the Secretary of State started a little as in some surprise ; but though such was the case, the astonishment was too momentary to attract attention, and he in-

stantly addressed himself to the prelate, even with more cordiality than he had exhibited towards any of the company.

He was followed by the Duke of Ormond, a remarkably graceful and well bred man, in a suit of purple velvet, who passed towards his host with that air of ease and elegance, which is to be seen in perfection only, in the more amiable and more intelligent representatives of some of our most illustrious families.

Then came the Marquis of Dorchester, with his daughter, Lady Wortley Montagu, and her husband. The two former were talking in a very animated manner; but Mr. Wortley Montagu, notwithstanding his intellectual countenance, either had very little to say, or did not think the present a fit time to express it. For so young a man, he appeared very thoughtful. Whether this arose from any uneasiness respecting the conduct of his wife, or respecting the present alarming state of things in England, we cannot say with any confidence.

The old Marquis soon made his way to the ladies, where he rivalled Lord Bellenden in the extent of his homage; and the fervency of his congratulations to his fair young hostess exceeded

by a great deal the intensity of feeling expressed by all the rest of the gentlemen put together.

Next came a curious-looking, lively dame, in an extravagant dress, who was announced as the Duchess of Bolton ; and hardly had she made good her entrance, when with a most undeniable Irish brogue she addressed herself to the company, and complained of the steepness of Richmond hill, which had caused one of her horses to slip down, and cut his knees.

Then she launched out in an apparently endless dissertation on the nature and treatment of broken knees ; at last she recognised her acquaintances amongst the company, only addressing them by wrong names, and reminding them of matters of which they were perfectly ignorant, every such circumstance having occurred to other parties.

However, the Duchess went good humouredly blundering on, making the oddest observations, and the most ill-timed remarks, it was possible for her to have made, yet her broad face, and her lustrous eyes beaming with good nature, no one could resist.

The Brigadier had looked towards the door several times, even in the midst of a most animated conversation, with Mr. Secretary Craggs, and the

Duke of Ormond, for by this time, the company had got into little knots of twos and threes; some discussing politics, some petticoats; some the new singer at the opera, and some the new head-dress from Paris. The dinner hour had arrived, but all the guests had not. It was not possible for Brigadier General Lepel to commit such a mistake in good manners, as to look at his watch, especially before a nobleman so distinguished for his breeding, as the Duke of Ormond; but he was getting extremely apprehensive, that the dinner would suffer if the cook was kept waiting much longer, and there was a vast struggle going on in his mind, between his respect for the absent, and his fear of displeasing the present.

At last, to his great relief, the folding doors opened to their full extent, the Duchess of Marlborough was announced, and the next moment that very stately lady entered, evidently attired with more than usual care, and fully intent upon appearing before the guests of her old admirer with more than usual dignity.

There was a curious and not uninteresting lesson exhibited in the fine shades of ceremoniousness with which her Grace behaved to the different individuals whom she chose to honour with a re-

cognition. There was a condescending familiarity in her behaviour to Mary Lepel and her father, which contrasted well with her high bred courtesy to such people as the Duke of Ormond, the Marquis of Dorchester, and Lord Bellenden. As a minister of state, Mr. Secretary Craggs was entitled to her favourable consideration; but then she knew his father had been a footman, which induced her to mingle her courtesy with a good deal of dignity. Mr. Wortley Montagu also held a government office, and he was well related, so she could safely condescend a little. The Bishop was an old acquaintance, with him she could be pleasant and social, without committing herself. The officers she seemed to think scarcely worthy of her notice. There was but one officer, she thought in the world, and he was the great Duke of Marlborough.

The ladies also had their graduated scale of civility, from the stiff acknowledgment accorded to Fanny Meadows, up to the dignified salutation due to the Duchess of Bolton, and to an Earl's daughter, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

The Brigadier had scarcely observed this instance of fine discrimination so elaborately displayed, when the announcement was given that

dinner was ready. He quickly presented himself before the great Duchess, and in his courtliest manner asked permission to hand her Grace to dinner. She condescendingly granted the desired honour, but kindly expressed her wish that his daughter should precede her. Mary Lepel was therefore handed first to the dining room by the elegant Duke of Ormond. She found him a most agreeable companion, and as she walked by his side, did not at all envy "Cleopatra," or "Clelia," or any one of her favorite heroines.

They were followed by the Duchess of Marlborough and her host. The latter as he left the room cast a triumphant glance at his numerous likenesses, who appeared completely to sympathize in his present grandeur. Then came the Duchess of Bolton and the Marquis of Dorchester; the former entertaining her companion with an exceedingly droll story about a Tipperary pig that told fortunes. After them came the fascinating Lady Wortley Montagu and Lord Bellenden. He all gallantry, she scarcely attempting to conceal her ridicule. They were followed by Mr. Secretary Craggs and Mary Bellenden; the well informed Secretary extremely amused by his companion's affectation of French refinement.

The Bishop and Mr. Wortley Montagu each laid claim to the blooming Sophy Howe, and she laughingly gave her decision in favour of the prelate, who rewarded her, till she found her seat, with a succession of complimentary observations, that made her acknowledge she had lost nothing by her devotion to the Church. General Scroop Howe had obtained possession of the Bishop's quiet daughter, Mrs. Morice, who was willing to entertain a favourable opinion of his gallantry, till as they passed out of the door he demanded in a sharp clear voice, where she had served, and in what regiment.

As Fanny Meadows had also been monopolised by another General, with one eye, Mr. Wortley Montagu found himself under the necessity of taking for his companion a little girl with red hair and a pug nose, as she was the only female left to receive his attentions. To so fervent an admirer of female beauty, this was rather a disagreeable companionship; but his breeding conquered his refinement, and he led the young lady out of the apartment with quite as much deference as he would have displayed, had she been as engaging as Mary Lepel, or as fascinating as Mary Bellen-den.

Some little time elapsed before all the guests had found their proper places. The young hostess sat at the head of a long table, completely covered with massive plate and cut glass, wherever the dishes, or rather their silver covers, allowed sufficient space for them. She was supported on the right by the Duke, and on the left by the Marquis. At the other end of the table sat the Brigadier with the Duchess of Marlborough on his right hand, and the Duchess of Bolton on his left; and a gentleman and lady sat alternately along each side of the table.

After the Bishop had said "Grace," which notwithstanding the unclerical characteristics he had already displayed, he repeated in an exceedingly impressive and fervent manner, soup was served from each end of the table. Behind his young mistress's chair, stood the grave and respectable Rackstraw, keeping a steady glance at his numerous subordinates, and a careful scrutiny at the arrangements of the table. Behind his master, John Coachman had been placed, having been well drilled by his friend the butler, to qualify him for such a post.

The other male servants of the establishment, including Pompey and a tall young man who filled

the place of footman, made vacant by the disappearance of the mysterious James, with several others hired for the occasion, were distributed at intervals along both lines, with strict injunctions to attend to the wants of the guests, with as much celerity as was practicable without breakage or spillage.

With these admirable arrangements the dinner proceeded most admirably. The soup gave place to turbot and salmon, and the fish having been removed, the more substantial dishes made their appearance. At Mary Lepel's end was placed a haunch of venison. The young lady had served the soup, and the fish with matchless grace and facility; but to carve a haunch of venison was altogether another matter. Nevertheless, the Brigadier's daughter went through her task, in a manner that did credit to the instructions of her carving-master. She was so fortunate as to serve every one with their favourite bits, and was from that time forth quoted by the delighted magnates at both ends of the table, as the most accomplished young lady of their acquaintance.

Mary Lepel experienced no small degree of pride as she received the graceful compliments of the Duke of Ormond; she felt her position a very grati-

fying one—she doubted whether the heroine, even of “*Le Voyage de l'Isle d'Amour*” ever presided at her father's table to the satisfaction of so many noble guests. She saw her dear school-fellows envied her the admiration her conspicuous position procured her, and her happiness would have been complete could she only have been seen by the peerless Penelope Stiffandstern.

The Duke early asked her to take wine, and then this social ceremony became general—all the ladies had similar invitations, but every gentleman deemed it his duty to pay this mark of respect to his youthful hostess. She acknowledged the compliment with well-bred courtesy, merely touching the wine with lips that looked far more tempting; and as the Bishop for the second time chose to pay her this honour, she could not withhold from herself the pleasing impression that to the best of her knowledge, there was no instance in “*Les Amours d'Aristandre et de Cléonice*,” of a lady having been asked to take wine with no less than eight different gentlemen, including a Duke, a Marquis, a minister of state, three general officers and a Bishop.

As the wine began to circulate, and the appetites of the guests were giving way before the

many good things their hospitable host had spread before them, the conversation became more animated, and a jest now and then began to be heard, and what was far more to the purpose, the wit began to be appreciated. More attention was paid to the ladies both old and young ; not that at any time during the dinner they had been neglected, for that was not a fault likely to be attributed to the gentlemen of the Court of George I.; but there came now a period more favourable for gallantry, and it was eagerly seized upon.

The stately Duchess of Marlborough dined and said little, though her attentive host was unceasing in his efforts to please her : the Duchess of Bolton, however, made him ample amends for that great lady's silence, for her rich doric flowed on in an apparently inexhaustible stream, on every subject, from the fall of man to the fall of stocks.

Lady Wortley Montagu was fascinating the gentlemen nearest to her by her careless disregard of the most ordinary social proprieties, and making brilliant remarks that still further increased their admiration. Mary Bellenden was displaying the most attractive of her Parisian acquisitions, and giving utterance to the newest of

her French phrases, to Mr. Secretary Craggs on one side of her, and Mr. Wortley Montagu on the other; and felt assured, from their attentions, that she was creating a sensation. Sophy Howe was rattling on very saucily to the Bishop, who was not backward in paying her with her own coin. Fanny Meadows sat quiet and shy, and the rest merely put in a word or two now and then, satisfying themselves with playing the parts of good listeners.

So passed the first and second courses, and so in fact passed the dinner, during the whole period of which the Brigadier's daughter continued to gain upon the admiration of her father's guests, by the very winning manner in which she played her part as an agreeable and attentive hostess, and the perfect style in which she carved every dish set before her—fish, flesh, or fowl.

The enthusiasm of the worthy Bishop was so excited in her favour, that he insisted on taking wine with her a third time, which greatly amused the company, and caused an abundance of witty remarks: the young lady not at all disconcerted nor yet appearing too confident, readily responded to the prelate's challenge. Thanksgiving was then made by the Bishop, and the cloth cleared,

the wine and dessert put on table, and the servants dismissed.

Mary Lepel felt a great relief as she saw the dinner things leave the room. The great care she had taken for a week previously, that this entertainment should do honour to her father's hospitality was fully recompensed. Compliments had flown in upon her from all quarters, and in most instances these came from persons well qualified to pass judgment on the merits of such a banquet.

While she was congratulating herself on the complete success she had achieved, she was agreeably surprised by the Duke of Ormond rising to propose her health, which he did in language the most refined, and in a manner the most flattering that can be conceived. No toast could have given more universal satisfaction ; the gentlemen in a body rose, raised their glasses, and to the name of Mary Lepel tossed off their bumpers with a devotion worthy of so fair a cause. Even the ladies responded to it with a pleased alacrity ; the Duchess of Marlborough adding to her young friend's name a brief but gratifying compliment, and the Duchess of Bolton giving an addition no less sincere, but a considerable deal

longer, uttered in a racy brogue, that made its expression still more emphatic.

The Brigadier rose, and returned thanks in a neat speech ;—a model of courtly politeness and of gratified vanity. He felt himself a proud, and a happy man. If his daughter could command such success in his own circle, what distinction might she not achieve when removed to a more brilliant sphere ? And then there came a glimpse of Court grandeur, and Court influence, that so dazzled his eyes he could not see that the decanters had stopped opposite to him.

The attentions of the gentlemen towards the ladies now became much more marked. These were the golden moments for conquest and compliment ; and at the table of Brigadier-General Lepel there were very few individuals of the male sex who did not become as tender in their attentions to their fair neighbours, as the privilege of the time allowed. In this general distribution of gallantry, the fair scholars of the estimable Penelope Stiffandstern had nothing to complain of. Mary Lepel, though aiming least at conquest, received the most assiduous attentions from her noble and accomplished neighbours ; her schoolfellows, excepting Fanny Mea-

dows, whose reserve no gallantry could diminish, appeared to be equally well cared for.

The true spirit of conviviality now began to exert itself. Anecdote followed anecdotes, and jest succeeded jest, in quick succession. The stately consort of the great Marlborough began to be communicative ; the Irish pleasantry of the Duchess of Bolton became broader and more piquant ; the Bishop told his most effective stories ; Lady Wortley Montagu uttered her most brilliant sallies ; and Lord Bellenden put forth his most exquisite compliments. There was a good deal of talking, and no slight degree of mirth ;—eyes that were bright before, now seemed to float in splendour ; and lips that were so lately admired for the freshness of their colour, now appeared to have their vermillion ripeness bathed in some delicious dew, that gave them a thousand new fascinations.

After the health of their host's admirable daughter had been drunk, other toasts followed. There was “the King,” which, of course, was received with all proper respect. It was remarked that the Bishop of Rochester at first did not appear very eager to join in this toast ; but at last he raised his glass, and with a peculiar

emphasis gave, "the King." Whatever there was remakarble in the Prelate's manner, it did not escape the quick eye of the Secretary of State; who, as if to take away any ambiguity there might be in the toast, improved it by saying, with an emphasis equally peculiar, "King George I."

Several loyal and sentimental toasts were also given, and the decanters were going round very merrily, when the Brigadier's daughter caught the eye of her stately friend at the other end of the table, and interpreting its meaning, rose from her seat. Her example was followed by all the ladies of the party. The movement caused a corresponding one in the gentlemen, several of whom hastened to the door.

In the confusion, the Duchess of Marlborough, unperceived glided close to the Bishop of Rochester, and whispered in his ear, "Beware of Craggs!" She then proceeded to follow her charming young hostess, to whom the principal gentlemen were directing a whole quiver of courtly compliments, bowing, as herself and the rest of the ladies passed them to where the more fortunate Duke of Ormond, with the handle of the door in his hand, was addressing every lady with some well-

turned compliment ; and as each approached acknowledged her departure with that easy grace for which he was so celebrated.

The Brigadier took his daughter's place, and the gentlemen closed up their ranks ; and a plentiful supply of wine having been brought in, the decanters went their round at a brisker pace. The conversation now became much more animated ; the most reserved exhibiting a disposition to be heard ; and the jests, and anecdotes, and stories, exemplified the freedom in which the speakers now thought it proper to indulge.

By the new arrangement, Mr. Secretary Craggs was brought next to the Bishop of Rochester, to whom he immediately began to pay the most particular attention ; challenging him to full bumpers, and giving loose to the jovial spirit of the moment, with a zest that could scarcely fail of recommending him to so eminently social a personage, as the worthy Prelate.

On the other side of the Bishop sat Mr. Wortley Montagu, who was no less assiduous in his attentions. It was rather strange, that while one drew him into a lively discussion, the other kept carefully replenishing his wine glass ; and the extreme friendliness which both

evinced in their conduct, the high estimation they gave him to understand they felt for his abilities, and the sincere affection with which they regarded his virtues, could not but be highly gratifying to a person of the Bishop's warm temperament, particularly as all this proceeded from a minister of state high in the confidence of his sovereign, and from a member of a distinguished family, holding a handsome post at Court.

His Lordship had reason to congratulate himself on possessing powerful friends in such a quarter, as he had been completely neglected since the present sovereign came to the throne; the King having on one occasion treated him with marked rudeness owing to his exertions in favour of the exiled Stuarts, which at the death of Queen Anne had been more prominent than discreet. And since he had received this treatment he was well aware that his secret proceedings had been of such a character as in case of discovery to make such friends highly desirable.

The Bishop was in high spirits, pouring forth a flood of social pleasantries that kept his companions in ecstacies, and at every fresh bumper he quaffed giving utterance to some admirable jest more pointed than any of its numerous pre-

decessors. By some means or other that never failing subject of ridicule the King's mistresses was started, and nothing could exceed the humour with which he referred to the tall, scraggy Schulenburg, and made allusion to the broad, blowsy Kielmansegge.

Mr. Secretary Craggs now seemed to take the Bishop entirely into his own hands, for his co-adjutor was engaged in an animated argument with Lord Bellenden as to the relative merits of two rival dancers who had lately appeared at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. The good prelate had drank what was a large quantity of wine even in those days, when from three to six bottles were very frequently the allowance for a sitting; and he looked and talked as if it was exerting its influence upon him.

Mr. Secretary became extremely confidential and mysterious—dropped his voice to a whisper—alluded to “a party over the water”—intimated that he had friends in quarters he did not count upon, and in an ambiguous manner appeared to desire nothing so much as the perfect success of those plans which he was well aware that personage was pursuing.

The Bishop's faculties might have been a little

affected by his copious draughts of his host's claret. He well understood these allusions to the Pretender, and did not see anything remarkable in a Secretary of State to King George I. being so disgusted with his service as to be anxious for a master in the son of James II. He had known of similar things taking place; and thrown off his guard by the apparent sincerity of his companion, he was about to explain the designs—with which he was well acquainted—the Chevalier St. George, as he was usually styled, was carrying out to recover the crown his father had lost, when the whispered warning of his friend the Duchess of Marlborough, which he had totally forgotten, recurred to him.

He saw the imminent danger in which he stood—and this sense of the great peril in which he had placed himself and his friends, sobered him in an instant. He saw too, or fancied he saw the manœuvre of the wily statesman beside him in the apparent attentions he exhibited that his glass should never be empty, whilst he now remembered the crafty Secretary seldom had recourse to his own. The Bishop blessed his old friend for her foresight, and cursed himself for a blockhead.

He contrived however very adroitly to change

the subject without further committing himself; and notwithstanding the many clever efforts made by his associate to obtain his confidence, eluded making any communication that could prove he knew more of the intentions of the Pretender than had been borne to him by public rumour.

In the mean time the remainder of the Brigadier's guests had been proceeding with their potations with such good will that their effects could not be mistaken. Their faces were flushed, their wigs awry ; some had soiled their delicate ruffles, and others had creased their magnificent waist-coats. Shouting, laughing, singing, seemed to be mingled together in a riotous jumble—every gentleman was made to toast his favourite lady, and several appeared ready to vouch for her superiority in personal attractions, and for the generosity of her disposition in their favour. It did not seem to signify a rush to any, that the warmest of these panegyrists were married men, and that the several kind charmers they alluded to, were nearly related to others of the company.

The Brigadier vainly attempted to obtain silence ; and on his legs, holding fast by the table to support himself, he shouted and hiccuped with a praiseworthy perseverance—the only effect of

which for some time, seemed to be to make General Scroop Howe, who had fallen asleep—his wig having completely parted company with his bald head—open one eye. But not having the power to keep the heavy lids apart, they closed again, and he continued his snoring with redoubled energy.

“ Gentlemen ! gentlemen !” (Hiccup !) exclaimed the unsteady host for the twentieth time, looking with an air of ridiculous gravity towards his noisy guests—“ the Marquis—(hiccup)—the Marquis gentlemen — (hiccup)—the Marquis’s song—(hiccup)—We must have my Lord Marquis’s song.”

“ Silence !” shouted the Duke of Ormond, as he took up a lemon squeezer that had been in requisition for making punch, and struck the table with such force that the heavy sleeper jumped up with staring eyes, still dreaming he was attacking a battery at the head of his regiment.

“ Fix bayonets ! Charge !” he shouted with all the force of his lungs, and fell back to his former position. This raised a general laugh, and in the confusion the Bishop of Rochester slipped out of the room. The Marquis of Dorchester found that he might count on a tolerably attentive

audience, with the exception of one of the officers who had fallen on the floor.

THE MARQUIS OF DORCHESTER'S SONG.

I.

Come, jolly shepherd, now fold up your ewes,
 The sun has gone down to his bed in the west ;
 Come pull at the pitcher, and list to the news,
 We've a right to be merry as well as the best.
 The lads are all seeking their fiddles and labors,
 Let them jig with the lasses as long as they may ;
 Let us quaff this brown ale like a pair of good neighbours,
 And merrily, jollily, drink Care away.

“Chorus!” called out the singer! and at the word all the company who could make use of their voices, bawled in the most emphatic manner :—

CHORUS.

Come, jolly shepherd, now fold up your ewes,
 The sun has gone down to his bed in the west ;
 Come pull at the pitcher, and list to the news,
 We've a right to be merry as well as the best.
 The Marquis resumed his solo.

II.

We care not a penny for war or for peace,
 And of kings think as little, as they think of us ;
 Let them lay on fresh taxes, or let each tax cease,
 We need never trouble ourselves with their fuss.

Let the saints, as they strive to look solemn and sober,
Of their threats and their judgments at once take their fill ;
While we can enjoy such a jug of October,
Things can't be so bad, let them say what they will.

"Chorus!" bawled out the Marquis again.
"And every man standing upon his chair."

This command was more easily made than followed ; and ludicrous were the attempts to obtain the required elevation. Some began to mount at the back of the chair, others less ambitious strove to get up from the front ; but the stumbles, the slips, and the struggles of the less sober of the party were extremely diverting to the rest. The Brigadier, with an admirable patience had lifted one foot and then another ; but at every attempt to elevate it to the seat, holding fast to the arms, he always swung himself round to the side, where getting up was impossible.

At last he made a vigorous effort ; but in doing so, contrived to lose his hold, and in a moment came with a considerable concussion against Lord Bellenden, who was similarly circumstanced ; they then both went stumbling along the floor till they recovered their perpendicular by the assistance of the wall. They looked at each other with an immense deal of gravity, and wished,

like well-bred men, to bow and apologize; but both knew what the effort would cost them. The old beau's politeness, however, triumphed, and he was beginning to hiccup his concern at the accident, when he felt his feet sliding, and down he went with undiminished gravity, till he found himself in a sitting posture on the floor.

The other, with spontaneous civility, held out his hand to assist his friend to rise, and of course immediately found himself in the same predicament; and as the chorus of their more successful friends had commenced from the few chairs that were occupied, they, with all the solemnity of judges, joined in it from their less aspiring, but much safer positions.

CHORUS.

Come, jolly shepherd, now fold up your ewes,
The sun has gone down to his bed in the west.
Come pull at the pitcher, and list to the news,
We've a right to be merry as well as the rest.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERIOUS ASSIGNATION.

This little spot of earth you stand upon
Is more to me than the extended plains
Of my great father's kingdom. Here I reign
In full delights, in joys to power unknown ;
Your love my empire, and your heart my throne.

THOMAS SOUTHERNE.

WHEN the ladies retired from the dinner-room, they proceeded to a long apartment at the back of the mansion, which had been prepared for dancing. A small orchestra had been erected, in which a harp, two fiddles, and as many flutes, were already in full action. The younger members of many of the neighbouring families had been invited to the dance, and they began to arrive as their fair young hostess made her appearance in the room.

Dancing speedily commenced ; minuets, gavots-

tes, and cotillions, succeeded each other at due intervals, and the graceful Mary Lepel made an impression in the dance not less favourable than she had created at the dinner. Her schoolfellows too, were advancing rapidly in the estimation of their partners.

Mary Bellenden's French accomplishments produced a prodigious effect; Sophy Howe was irresistible, with her soft languishing eyes, and captivating freedoms; and even the cold and distant Fanny Meadows found both admirers and partners sufficient to satisfy the most coquettish of school girls. Nevertheless, neither of the young beauties was perfectly satisfied;—all had too lately enjoyed the attentions of several of the most elegant men of the age, and now the compliments of their less distinguished partners sounded vapid and unmeaning.

The Duchess of Bolton amused them with her drolleries; still they waited anxiously for the appearance of their dinner associates in the dancing-room. It was not, however, till a late hour that any of them came. These consisted only of the Duke of Ormond, the Marquis of Dorchester, Mr. Secretary Craggs, and Mr. Wortley Montagu. They joined in

one country dance, and then departed; as did also the two Duchesses, and Lady Mary.

Supper was announced. The company partook of a slight repast, then resumed their dancing with renewed vigour. The fair pupils of Minerva House strove to abandon themselves to their present enjoyments, with their usual high sense of pleasure; but neither minuet, nor country dance appeared to gratify them; and they felt a great relief when the last of their young associates had departed, and they could be at liberty to retire to their several rooms.

The first thing that attracted the attention of Mary Lepel on entering her bedroom, was a small, highly scented *billet*, lying on the dressing-table, addressed to her. She reflected but a short time, whether she should open it. Her little head was as full of romance as her heart was of innocence. It was not exactly right, she thought, to receive clandestine communications; but then no heroine, to the best of her knowledge, had ever sent back so very nice looking a *billet*.

Then she should be obliged to open it to know where to send it to;—then again, it might come from a concealed admirer, possessed of as many perfections as her favourite Prince Oroondates.

With a trembling hand, and a palpitating heart, she broke the seal—a Cupid with his finger to his lips. This was sufficiently significant. She read the following sentences :—

“ It is respectfully, yet earnestly requested by the writer—who is a person of distinction and honour—that the incomparable Mary Lepel will honour one of the most devoted of her innumerable adorers, by appearing with her fair visitors, and any additional escort she pleases, in Ham Walk, at the hour the company usually assemble. An affair of the utmost consequence to her happiness depends on her complying with this request, without the least delay, with respect to which it is equally necessary she should maintain the strictest secrecy.”

To say the Brigadier’s daughter was astonished, would be using an inadequate expression. She was perfectly bewildered. She knew not what to make of so singular an application. An assignation she had always heard was generally required to be as private as possible; but the writer desired to meet her surrounded by her friends!

It was most strange. Who could it be? Surely some one among her guests of this brilliant day. But she could not decide who. What

could he want? Nothing very dangerous, or he would have desired a private meeting. Should she accede to the request? It was an adventure of the most mysterious description; in all her reading she had never met with any heroine to whom such an application had been made. It might lead to something, as the writer said, of consequence to her happiness. In so public a place, and protected by her companions, it was impossible harm could come to her. She would go.

Mary Lepel said her prayers and went to bed, and dreamt a good ten volumes of romantic adventures.

Exactly at the same moment each of her schoolfellows in the privacy of her own chamber discovered a similar billet directed to her, and on reading it made out exactly the same seal and the same words, (with the alteration of the name of the party addressed,) that had so mystified and astonished the Brigadier's daughter. Mary Bellenden and Sophy Howe decided at once upon going; Fanny Meadows was half inclined not to venture, as the unknown writer might build some improper hope upon such an accordance with his

wishes. Finally her curiosity got the better of her prudery, and she also determined to go.

It has been declared that these very attached friends were bound together by the strong tie of mutual confidence. It might, therefore, very reasonably be imagined, that their first act on meeting in the morning would be to acquaint each other with the strange communication that had been made to them. They did nothing of the kind. These confidential friends most carefully kept their secret from each other. They chattered away during the morning, with great fluency on the events of the preceding day, without giving the slightest intimation of the most interesting of all.

The Brigadier came down to breakfast, looking extremely lugubrious. He tried to behave becomingly towards his beautiful visitors. But he was so dull that his portraits, one and all, must have been ashamed of him. He apologised for not being in his usual good spirits, and laid the blame on flying symptoms of gout ; he would have been more correct had he stated flying symptoms of claret. But his fair daughter and her fair friends most charmingly excused his deficien-

cies ; in fact, they were too much taken up with thinking upon their approaching assignation to heed him.

This event, notwithstanding the air of pleasant thoughtlessness each of the sworn friends assumed, was exerting a powerful influence over their minds. Each was speculating upon the station in life, the appearance, and the disposition of her unknown admirer, and building as many castles in the air as would have required a very large surface for their foundations.

It must here be remarked that the general bias of Mary Lepel's nature was towards an unreserved confidence ; and nothing but the strictness with which, in the mysterious communication she had received, secrecy had been insisted on, prevented her from acquainting her beloved friends with the whole affair. Her beloved friends were, however, a little older ;—and in worldly knowledge some of them a great deal wiser. The confidence reposed in them by the writer they would not have regarded, had they not been assured the adventure could not be properly carried out by preserving it. But they most decidedly were against admitting either of their affectionate and trusty schoolfellows into their secret.

It was extraordinary when the Brigadier's daughter, at the close of the morning meal intimated a wish that her visitors shbould enjoy a pleasant promenade in Ham Walk, how unanimous her devoted friends were in seconding it. Each had heard of the fashion this spot possessed, and all were aware that many distinguished people were always to be seen there at a certain hour every day.

Sophy Howe had caught up the paper on the breakfast-table, which the gallant old Brigadier, in the presence of the ladies, had carefully abstained from looking at, and in a very merry manner read an advertisement from it, in which the poet Pope denied a report, that some malicious enemy had circulated, to the effect that he had been cudgelled in this favourite place of public resort. The Brigadier joined in the conversation, and was readily persuaded to escort the young beauties to a place so celebrated.

Everything seemed to favour the secret projects of the youthful adventuresses ; and neither entertained the slightest suspicion that the mysterious assignation included either of her schoolfellows, or was in any way known to one of them. The time drew near, and they retired for the purpose of getting themselves ready for their walk.

The care they had taken with their yesterday's toilet bore no comparison to the attention with which they now put on their most becoming walking costume. Even Mary Bellenden, who according to her own statements had been so familiar with adventures, looked upon the anticipated meeting as deserving all her knowledge of personal decoration in preparing herself for it.

The Brigadier, whose toilet was always carefully made, considered that his publicly appearing with four such charming young creatures as he was about to escort, demanded more than ordinary attention in his dress, and he occupied an additional half hour in his preparations. At last the old beau appeared before his impatient companions, in a new wig—a fawn-coloured velvet coat descending to his knees, laced with gold, with splendid ruffles at the end of its immense cuffs; it was buttoned only a little way up the breast so as to disclose the fineness of the cambric frill that covered his shirt. His breeches were also of velvet; and he wore the usual high shoes, with fine stockings beautifully worked up the leg. In one hand he carried a clouded cane; he held a three cornered cocked hat under his arm, and the handle of his sword projected from the side of his

coat, the end of the scabbard appearing a little below the left knee.

The ladies were already prepared. His daughter wore a scarlet cardinal, in the hood of which, her beautiful and very youthful face looked inexpressibly interesting. Below the cardinal she had put on a moderately hooped petticoat, of a recent fashion, called an *allejah* petticoat, striped with green, gold and white.

Mary Bellenden came forth in a head of fine looped lace, fresh from Paris, with a scarlet and gold atlas petticoat edged with silver, having an extensive hoop. Her stomacher was laced in front. She wore a small apron, trimmed with lace. Two or three patches in the last Parisian fashion appeared upon her face; and a fine cambric handkerchief was held in her white hand.

Sophy Howe wore a Flanders laced hood with a blue and silver silk gown and petticoat; and Fanny Meadows a white beaver hat, faced with pink silk and trimmed with gold, with a flowered silk gown and petticoat. They all wore the ordinary walking shoes and stockings; but not one thought it necessary to take a mask—very judiciously imagining that if she wished to be recog-

nised, she must appear without such a customary addition to a lady's walking dress.

In this manner they left Petersham Manor, and taking the road to Ham, were in a few minutes proceeding down a narrow lane, leading to a large mansion, a short distance to which, an avenue of lofty trees shaded a delightful verdant promenade, known to all the fashionable world at this period. The Brigadier walked between Sophy Howe and Fanny Meadows. Both young ladies were remarkable for their beauty, though there existed a marked contrast in the two. The fair Sophy looking as impassioned as the other looked unsusceptible.

They were followed by Mary Lepel and Mary Bellenden. Both possessed a striking style of beauty—of a higher and more intellectual order than that of their young schoolfellows. Lord Bellenden's daughter was much the more mature beauty, her figure being more developed; but the freshness of the look of her companion, the transparency of her skin, the natural elegance of her movements would, amongst the best judges of female loveliness, have carried off the palm from her very accomplished rival.

Before they had entered upon the walk, they

had passed several groups of ladies and gentlemen going and returning. As they approached their destination these parties increased, some being attended by sedan-chairs, many of which were in requisition for the use of such as preferred being carried.

At last they came upon a crowd of well-dressed persons of both sexes, slowly parading up and down the walk; some stopping to exchange courtesies with their friends, and get rid of their budget of gossip, scandal, politics, or whatever they chose to converse about. A few ladies wore masks; many wore patches; others carried their masks in their hands, and all were gazing, and criticising, and coquetting with extraordinary industry. Some wore hats, some hoods, some "heads;" and their dresses were made of the most costly materials, and from the variety of colour and richness of material gave to the scene a remarkably picturesque effect.

The gentlemen wore three cornered hats, several handsomely edged. They seemed as often carried under the arm as on the head. The wigs were of various sizes, from the flowing peruke of many curls, to the bob and cue perukes of more modest pretensions. The coat formed the principal feature

in their apparel, and it was usually very rich, of velvet or dark cloth laced with gold. Many carried handsome canes; some affecting eccentricity, bore a tremendous staff nearly as tall as themselves, with a grotesque head carved at the top, such as the Earl of Peterborough brought with him into the chamber of the Princess of Wales.

The appearance of the Brigadier with his beautiful charge attracted general attention as soon as they entered on the walk. The ladies stared with astonishment, the gentlemen with admiration. In the general company there were several females possessed of considerable personal attractions, but being ladies of fashion, accustomed to dissipation and racket, their beauty wore a faded look, which contrasted very unsatisfactorily with the blooming fascinations of the more youthful beauties who now appeared upon the scene.

The enchanting faces and graceful figures of Fanny Meadows and Sophy Howe excited much attention ; but the gaze of the observers falling immediately afterwards upon the still more lovely Mary Bellenden, and her exquisite and beautiful companion, the impression they made was more transitory than it would otherwise have been.

However great may have been the personal advantages of her fair schoolfellows, it was evident before long that the innocence and purity that appeared to breathe in the admirable countenance of Mary Lepel, caused her to be the favourite of all persons possessed of genuine taste who were to be found amongst the numerous gay promenaders of Ham Walk.

Brigadier General Lepel was quite as much in his element in the midst of this gay crowd, having about him four of the most beautiful women it contained, as he could have been in his more martial days leading his troops against the enemy. His heaviness and dullness, the result of the previous day's debauch, seemed totally to have left him, and his eye brightened and his back became more erect as he addressed himself to the youthful beauties on each side of him, or gracefully returned the courtesies of some of his friends who thought proper to confer on the old beau the honour of a recognition.

The behaviour of his very attractive charge was not much more varied than their thoughts. Each fair damsel was in anxious expectation of receiving some secret sign from her unknown adorer, and strove to disguise her anxiety by

keeping up a continued conversation respecting the more remarkable persons she passed. The persons of some were known to Lord Bellenden's daughter, and she also pretended to be familiar with their characters and histories, on which she managed to say a great deal more than deserves repetition.

“*Voilà, ma mignonne!*” she exclaimed with a gesture so French that there could be no disputing its nationality, “do you see that very rakish looking man by the trees yonder?” And she pointed to a gaily dressed old nobleman standing under some trees at a little distance, talking with an elderly lady, very much patched, and very much painted. “That, child, is John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham. A dear horrid wretch of a man—a great foe to female innocence. *Prenez garde, ma chère*—the man is absolutely a monster. He has betrayed scores of poor trusting women to ruin, and commits the most abominable actions when engaged in his nefarious schemes. *Ma foi*, I am astonished they do not chain up such wretches.”

Mary Lepel looked at the pallid libertine, and felt shocked at the existence of such depravity.

“The lady to whom he is talking,” continued

the speaker, "is worthy of his companionship. You see the remains of a royal mistress ; *sans doute* one of the beauties of the Court of Charles II. You behold all that time has left of the Duchess of Cleveland. Ah, child, it is lamentable to behold that painted mass of wrinkles striving to maintain a bad influence over a generation that were in their cradles when that bad influence was first called into action. *O bon Dieu !* I am amazed at her impudence."

The ruin of the once powerful and profligate beauty, that reared its trembling head among so many fresh and admirable forms, was certainly not entitled to create respect. The garish antiquity seemed revolting to the unsophisticated nature of the pure-minded Mary Lepel.

"But do you see that dignified personage coming along the walk in the midst of a small crowd of what are evidently his particular friends ?" inquired Lord Bellenden's daughter, directing the attention of her friend to an approaching group who seemed to be all engaged in an animated discussion. "Oh *mon Dieu !* how are the mighty fallen ! A few short months he was one of the most powerful men at Court, as he was the ablest. Now, if what I have heard be

true, he has not sufficient influence to save himself from impending ruin. That is the celebrated St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke. You may observe that, with the exception of his companions, who are certain authors and poets whose company he assumes to delight in, scarcely any one notices him. It is well known he is a doomed man.

“ Some of his companions I think you have seen before. That crooked little fellow talking with so rapt an air is, you know, Mr. Pope, our Twickenham acquaintance ; and the equally undignified parson-like personage, whose laugh seems so caustic, is the new Dean of St. Patrick’s, Jonathan Swift. The more serious and thoughtful friend beside him is another great scholar, Dr. Warburton. Then there is Addison, who looks more like a gentleman than any of his associates. *Ma foi !* he may have gained his gentility from the wife he has lately married, who is a lady of quality, or he may have acquired it at Court, for he has had some employment there. There is a vastly pleasant creature in the same group,—his name is Gay. You will like him monstrously when you come to know him.

“ Oh, *ma mignonne*—observe that bold, dash-

ing-looking young man, in the velvet coat trimmed with silver. His countenance wearing that decided devil-may-care expression which can only belong to such restless, riotous spirits. He is making up to Lord Bolingbroke, determined to notice him in the most public manner, because he sees every body else afraid to go too near him. That is the notorious Philip, Duke of Wharton ; a man of many follies, some crimes, and perhaps a few, a very few good qualities. But he is wild as an unbroken colt—a dear, tormenting devil, who is ever being engaged in the maddest extravagances that ever distinguished an inmate of Bedlam."

As the young Duke looked handsome, and was not ill made, the Brigadier's daughter thought it a thousand pities he should possess so bad a character. But a great deal of this she had known before, as his outrages against public order and public decency had established for him an unenviable reputation.

"*Parbleu!* this is strange!" exclaimed the young beauty loud enough to be heard by such of the company as were passing ; "I scarcely expected to meet his Grace here. You see that pompous man, child, who looks so solemn as he walks along, scarcely deigning to acknowledge the

salutation of an inferior. That is the Duke of Newcastle. Here too comes the old Duke of Somerset—the little well shaped man with a black complexion. He is even a prouder man than his Grace of Newcastle. They salute each other—see how the pompous Newcastle cringes to his stern superior, and how haughtily the old peer returns his greeting. *C'est un homme rigide*; he looks as if he could scarcely be brought to bow to his sovereign—as though he thought the Somersets had no equals on earth."

The meeting of the two Dukes was certainly a singular one, and attracted other observers besides Mary Bellenden.

"*Ma foi*, here come some of our pleasant associates of yesterday. There is the intellectual and well bred Duke of Ormond, with Mr. Wortley Montagu and Lady Mary. *Bon Dieu*, how she is flirting with the Duke! Odious woman! her conduct is really getting too bad. She monopolizes all the handsomest and best bred men she meets with; and she dresses so vastly well! *Elle s'est donnée de belles robes.*"

The two parties met, and accosted each other with well bred civility; Lady Wortley Montagu seeming particularly delighted at the meeting.

The Duke of Ormond did not seem, but was delighted. He had seen the beauties in full dress, but in morning dress he thought them still more bewitching. He paid his compliments with the refinement of a scholar and the ease of a gentleman.

The Brigadier was equally pleased with the rencontre. To be seen talking to a Duke was far from being disagreeable to him; but to be seen in conversation with a nobleman ranking so high in the arts of elegance and courtesy as the Duke of Ormond, was an honour which he was ready to appreciate at its full value; nor was he indifferent to the notice of so fashionable and beautiful a woman as the lady who accompanied him.

The fair associates of the Brigadier were equally well pleased at being accosted by his Grace; they were more, they were a little anxious. They entertained an impression that the Duke was the writer of their mysterious communication, and each fully expected he would afford her some sign of recognition. Under such influence they were differently affected: Lord Bellenden's daughter displayed all the resources of her Parisian education to fascinate him into some kind of declaration of his sentiments towards her; Sophy

Howe exhibited her dashing spirit in a manner that seemed intended to take him by storm; Fanny Meadows was more distant and reserved than ever. She wore a sort of touch me not look, possibly intended to excite the Duke of Ormond by the difficulties of the enterprise. Mary Lepel could not help feeling under some apprehension. She was pale and red by turns; in truth she was not a little bewildered by her own imagination.

To the astonishment of the school-fellows, the Duke proceeded onwards with his friends without giving any recognition, or affording either of the disappointed beauties any evidence on which to ground her supposition, that he was in the slightest degree concerned in the matter that engrossed her thoughts.

The Brigadier continued his observations, but his fair friends remained silent for some few minutes. By degrees they recovered the use of their voices, and Mary Bellenden resumed her commentaries on the company. The Duchess of Bolton was next recognised; she was approaching them, conversing in her usual eccentric manner with a man of disagreeable physiognomy, hard, severe, and stern, with a reckless

spirit in his restless eyes that seemed ready for any evil.

“Arrah now, who’d have thought it!” cried out the Duchess seemingly in some surprise. “The top of the morning to you, my darlings; it’s pleased I am to see you, Brigadier, in company with these illegant craythurs; no game-cock ever held his head so proud in the midst of his hens, as you hold yourself this blessed day—small blame to you. Were I a man, let alone a Gin’ral, attending upon so many beautiful angels, it’s myself that would hardly find a place big enough to hold me.”

The Duchess laughed good humouredly, and her friends joined in her mirth with equal heartiness. “I was telling my Lord Berkeley here,” she continued turning to her companions, “that Ham Walk isn’t the place it used to be: indeed and on my honour it’s a different spot entirely. May be it’s the company’s altered, for divil a Christian soul I see of ‘em but seems struggling to look as ugly as Old Nick, out of compliment I hear to some persons at Court, who it has been said have taken out a patent for frightening the crows. But when I look on your charming daughter, and her charming friends, Brigadier,

I'm in hopes the people 'll try and look as contrary as they can, so I do, that the place may appear decent for quiet peaceable folks like you and I."

The Duchess of Bolton laughingly passed on with the Earl of Berkeley, who had amused himself during their short stoppage by staring somewhat rudely at the young beauties. They thought by this scrutiny that his Lordship must be the person of whom they were in search, and fully anticipated receiving some sign that should place this beyond a doubt. No sign, however, came. My Lord Berkeley finished his scrutiny, made his bow, and they saw no more of him.

Here was another disappointment. It certainly looked rather provoking, that after our young beauties had made up their minds to agree to a proposed assignation, no one appeared to wish to have any communication to make to them. Mary Bellenden and Sophy Howe fancied they might as well have stayed where they were. Fanny Meadows began to consider she had been very imprudent; and Mary Lepel took some pains to satisfy herself that in all such adventures as she was engaged in, she knew of none in the course of her comprehensive reading, where the gentleman having re-

quested a secret interview, failed to keep his appointment.

Again they were stopped ; but this time it was by the gossiping Duke of Devonshire, accompanied by two or three young men of family, whom his Grace had been entertaining with his agreeable reminiscences. He introduced his companions ; they were by no means undesirable persons with whom to have an assignation ; and the troubled beauties were quite at a loss to determine whether the Duke of Devonshire or one of his friends were the writer of the mysterious billets.

They watched carefully ; but no evidence of the kind they looked for proceeded from his Grace or from his associates ; and when the party went on without sign or signal, the lovely faces of the fair company the Brigadier had in charge wore an expression that assuredly did not add to their attractiveness, though it could take very little from it. The more experienced began to entertain suspicions that they had been played a trick ; and when the thought entered their minds that they had been brought there only to be laughed at, they felt exceedingly indignant.

Mary Lepel, however, did not suppose this ;

she was too charitable, and perhaps too romantic to imagine such a thing. She felt satisfied a meeting had been intended, and could not but believe that some one or other of those numerous accidents that had so often set at nought the best intentions of the greatest heroes and heroines of her acquaintance, had prevented the writer of her mysterious communication from presenting himself before her at the place he had appointed for their interview.

But the hopes and fears of the little party were suddenly diverted by a great stir amongst the well-dressed crowd a little way in advance of them. The gentlemen were seen to take off their hats and bow with every outward show of respect; and with their fair companions to draw back on each side of the walk as if forming a lane for some party then advancing. This scene created some excitement in the breasts of Mary Lepel and her fair schoolfellows. They all knew it must mean something; and with a feeling natural to the sex, were extremely curious to know what something it meant.

At last as the company fell back before them a little man was seen, as plain in person as he was in dress, accompanied by two or three distinguished

looking gentlemen in full court-dress, in a somewhat awkward manner returning the courtesies of the persons by whom he was recognised.

"As I live," exclaimed the Brigadier with no slight astonishment, "'tis the Prince."

"The Prince!" simultaneously cried four female voices with surprise equally genuine.

The Brigadier was right. The little man in the snuff-coloured coat, who had caused so much commotion in Ham Walk, was the Prince of Wales, and he was not recognised by the party from Petersham Manor till only a very short distance intervened between the Brigadier and his ladies, and the Prince and his gentlemen.

Off went the cocked hat of Brigadier General Lepel, and the old beau performed a genuflexion such as he had never attempted since those glorious days when he flourished so successfully at the Court of King William, the first gentleman of his day. Having effected this mark of respect, the Brigadier was about to back to the side of the walk, fully expecting that the Prince, after some slight acknowledgment of his greeting, would pass on his way.

But it was evident his Royal Highness had no such intention. Instead of passing the old gentleman and his fair companions as he had passed all

the other groups, that had treated him with equal respect, as soon as the Prince arrived close to the little party, he shewed no disposition for moving.

"Ah mine goot vriend Prigadier," he exclaimed, his honest, though somewhat homely face lighting up with exultation as if he was meeting the best friend man ever knew. "I am petter bleased to zee you, dan I can express. And how is all your plooming vamily, mine goot vriend? Dese young ladies is your taughters, eh Prigadier?"

"No, please your Royal Highness;" commenced that courtly officer, still bowing to his interrogator.

"No! dese young ladies is not your taughters! den whose charming taughters you call dem, mine vriend?" And the Prince gazed from one to the other in unfeigned astonishment at their extraordinary beauty.

"Please your Royal Highness," again commenced the Brigadier, "I have but one daughter."

"You have but von charming taughter, eh Prigadier! Vell I am surprize you shall have no more dan von. But vich von is dat, mine vriend, for dey is all so pootivul, it is imbossible to shudge vich von it shall be."

"Please your Royal Highness, here is my

daughter," and the blushing modest Mary Lepel stood before the Prince in all her pure and innocent beauty. The effect seemed to be magical. The Prince gazed like one entranced; he had never before beheld a face so perfect, and so exquisite in its expression. For some seconds, he said not a word.

" My God!" he at last exclaimed in German with intense fervour, " this must be an angel fresh from Heaven!" Then added in his customary English, with a degree of respect he found he could not help feeling as he gazed upon her, " Madam Lepel, believe me I am mosh beholden to your goot fader for such agribble acquaintance. But such agribble acquaintance is only pegin ; ve must be goot vriends. I am shure ve shall be vere goot vriends. Der Prigadier shall take you to Court to pe introduce to mine vife, and der Princess shall pe every ting to you dat is agribble and brober."

Mary Lepel curtseyed, and in a few gentle words expressed her gratitude for his Royal Highness's condescension.

" Not at all, Madam Lepel, not at all!" replied the Prince hurriedly, " mine vife shall be telighted to make you as bleased as bossible ; every pody

shall be telighted. I mosh beg you mine goot vriend," he added turning from the daughter to the father, "to pring Madam Lepel to Court at vonce. Dere mosh be no telay ; dere mosh pe no exkuzes; mine vife is not to pe disabppointed. Vhat you say, eh Prigadier ?"

The old beau in courtly language acknowledged the honour, and readily promised to attend to his Royal Highness's commands.

The Prince then, though apparently reluctant to take his eyes off so fair a vision, asked who were the other ladies, and they were severally introduced to him with all the graceful ceremoniousness of which the Brigadier was master. His Royal Highness beheld much to admire in each of them, but he could not help occasionally taking off his eyes from their more developed loveliness to glance again at that rare style of beauty that had made so strong an impression upon him.

With something very like gallantry, though it was not of the most refined description, he expressed his admiration to the young beauties, and desired that they should make their appearance at Court in company with the Brigadier's daughter. Then with a few more congratulatory remarks to

the old beau, and another enraptured glance at his admirable daughter, he gallantly took off his hat to the party, and passed on. His suite did the same.

If the fair school-fellows had created an impression on their first appearance in Ham Walk, it had increased a hundred fold after the honour so publicly conferred upon them by the Prince of Wales; and Mary Lepel and her young companions were so delighted with their invitations and the interest they had excited, they quite forgot the mysterious communication that had brought them there.

A happy man was Brigadier General Lepel that day. As he promenaded through the line of curious fashionables, he felt he would not change places with the most distinguished personage amongst them.

“Mein Got!” exclaimed the Prince, when he had got out of hearing of his new acquaintances, “Every von is a veenix and noting else but a veenix; but as for der Prigadier’s taughter, ven I look at her she make me veel as innocent as von littel shild. Ha,” he added with a chuckle of infinite satisfaction, aside to his nearest com-

panion, who was the gay and handsome Philip Dormer, "I am imbatient for her to abbear at Court, for dose dam antederluvian grockodiles vill be ready to hang demselves as soon as dey shall catch zight of her."

CHAPTER XII.

A BISHOP "EN PRISE."

Evident proofs will appear of a meeting having been held by some considerable persons, one of whom is not far off, wherein it was proposed to proclaim the Pretender at the Royal Exchange.

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE.

FROM one or two hints that have been dropped during the course of this narrative, the reader must have entertained a suspicion that the new King of England was anything but popular with his new subjects; but this is but a faint idea of the state of public feeling in England. The shameless system of plunder pursued by his German dependants of both sexes, together with the repulsive behaviour of the sovereign, had disgust-

ed all ranks, and this feeling had been taken such advantage of by the agents of the son of James II. the Pretender as he was called, that the country was believed to be on the brink of rebellion, and a wide spread conspiracy, in which many persons of distinction were suspected of being concerned, there were several reasons for believing existed.

Society at this period was in a state of extraordinary ferment. The numerous friends of the Pretender were daily becoming bolder, and the feeling against the King hourly increasing in animosity. The ministers of George I. were well aware of the critical state of affairs, and were employing every engine to avert the threatened danger. To learn how to distinguish friends from enemies, and to obtain information of the intrigues that were going on, they employed spies to watch the movements of all persons supposed to be averse to the Hanoverian rule; but this only made the conspirators more prudent. They employed spies to deceive the spies, and disguise and deception were becoming general, to an extent it is scarcely possible to imagine.

In the metropolis disturbances took place, and the recognition of any of the foreigners, male or female who were known to possess the King's

favour, was the signal for insult, abuse, and riot. Caricatures, epigrams, satires, and every kind of squib, directed against the obnoxious Hanoverians, were frequently published and eagerly bought. The tone of popular opinion was both loud and sharp, and many shrewd persons anticipated it would soon burst forth into a chorus that would frighten the unpopular monarch back to his beloved electorate.

At this period rather late in the afternoon, an old lady was proceeding in a private sedan chair from Whitehall along King Street. Her two stalwart Irish chairmen were clothed in serviceable great coats, that allowed scarcely any part of the wearer to be seen but a pair of calves, of dimensions only to be met with in people of their calling. Of the person they carried it was impossible to distinguish anything beyond the fact that she was in the dress of an elderly lady; and it might be imagined from the direction in which she was being carried, that she was some pious old soul proceeding to hear afternoon service at Westminster Abbey.

Though there wanted but a few minutes to the time when service commenced, and the chairmen were evidently the most skilful of their class, it

seemed as though the good lady would not be allowed to reach the abbey as soon as she desired. In advance could distinctly be heard a confused shout of groans and cries, and other signs of a popular hubbub; and at no great distance a riotous mob was approaching, exhibiting every sign of being in a most mob-like humour.

"Arrah, Dan!" exclaimed the leading chairman, stopping and turning to his fellow labourer. "By the powers of Moll Kelly, here's as fine a shindy going on forenenst us, as ever you set eyes on."

"More power to your elbow!" replied the other, in a half joyful, half sorrowful tone. "And isn't it ourselves now, that's two misfortunit craters, to be afther coming this way this blessed minute, of all the days of the week, jist when there's sich a beautiful skrimmage as is coming down upon us, as will get the old lady, and the chair, and all of us smashed into smithereens, before we can say Jack Robinson."

Here the old lady whom they were bearing, and on whom their conversation had not been lost, put her head outside the window above the door. Her face was covered with a mask,

so that it was impossible to say how old she was, or what she was like.

“Chairman!” she cried.

“Och, the blazes?” exclaimed the first speaker, with much emphasis, as he quietly put down his burthen, and began to watch with no slight interest the doings of the approaching crowd. “It’s a beautiful row, sure enough, honey! and it’s meself that would like to be in the thick of it, with a nate bit of a stick, for the sake of a little diversion.”

“Chairman!—chairman!” cried the old lady, with more energy, as she stretched her head out of the window as far as she could.

“That’s thtrue for you, Paddy, my boy, and niver a bit of a lie,” added his companion; “and if it wasn’t for the old lady that’s inside, shouldn’t I be glad to try my luck with you at that same, for the honour of ould Ireland.”

“Chairman!—chairman!” shouted their somewhat frightened burthen, having many reasons for desiring to be as far from a popular tumult as possible, and beginning to entertain some fears that she should not only get into the midst of the approaching mob, but would be abandoned

by her bearers, from their inability to refrain from joining in any row that might be going on in their neighbourhood. The dreadful thought of the danger in which she was placed seemed to give the old lady additional strength to arrest the attention of the two Irishmen,—now so absorbed in the stirring scene before them, as to have become as completely forgetful of their burthen, as though they had never seen her.

“Faix, there at it in right airnest!” exclaimed Pat, with evident delight. “I’ll go bail, I’ll see the fun, any how.”

“Chairman!” screamed the poor old lady, stretching out her neck so as almost to protrude her body out of the sedan-chair.

“Och! blood and ouns, Dan, here’s the queer ould soul calling!” cried Paddy, in an undertone. “What is it, my Lady?” he added, briskly, putting his hand to a straggling lock of hair that hung over his forehead.

“Take me away!—Take me away, this minute! I must be carried out of the way of that mob. Bear me out of this riotous street without a moment’s delay.”

“Oh yes, my Lady;—in a brace o’ shakes, my

Lady," readily replied the chairman, without, however, making the slightest effort to do what he had been desired. Then he began to scratch his head, as he answered, "Please your honourable Ladyship, they've got so close upon us it's clane impossible to get out of the way on 'em before they've passed us. Wouldn't it be better, my Lady, to stand on this iligant doorstep, till the skirmmage has gone by, and left the coast clear."

"No; I insist upon being immediately carried out of the way of this horrid mob!" said the inmate of the sedan, in a commanding voice.

But the chairmen either did not care to fulfill her commands, or were determined to see the stirring scene that was approaching, for they went so slowly to work in raising their burthen, that the crowd had approached alarmingly near.

"Chairman!" again called out the old lady, in accents of alarm, seeing that if the men attempted to do her bidding, they were likely to be swept away in the rush of the approaching crowd. "Set the chair on that doorstep—and do you hear, chairman?"

"Oh, iligantly, my Lady."

"I'll give you a crown a piece if you'll prevent any rude fellow poking his head into the sedan. And do you hear, chairman?"

"Every word, my Lady."

"I'll give you a guinea a-piece, if you'll stand before the door, and prevent the mob pressing upon me ;—and don't leave the spot till the way is clear to proceed."

"Long life to your Ladyship ! Dan and I'll stand like two statutes, my Lady; and if any rascal shews so much as his ugly nose too near your Ladyship, by this and by that, we'll ate him without salt."

In a very brief space of time the chair was snugly placed on the doorstep, above the pavement ; its inmate sat back as much out of sight as possible, and the two stout Irishmen took up their positions before the door, effectually screening her from observation, whilst their Herculean proportions made them an excellent defence, should an attack be attempted.

These arrangements had just been completed, when the mob rushed forward, yelling, and shouting, and groaning, in a most horrible chorus. It was observed that a considerable part of this riotous assemblage wore the habit of citizens, or

respectable artizans, yet were equally active and vociferous with the ragged and vagabond portion.

What was the cause of all this uproar, could not be ascertained; but in the thickest part of the mob a chariot was seen—one of those curious vehicles with the body placed far back. The coachman, wearing a very handsome livery, was whipping his horses in a vain attempt to escape from the tumult, while three tall footmen, equally well apparelled, hung like powdered and dressed up monkeys, behind.

The yells became deafening; the groans most horrible; and many insulting expressions were shouted by the mob. When the chariot came opposite to the doorstep, where the old lady and her champions had placed themselves, it was seen that a woman rode in the chariot. She sat back; but she was perfectly visible to all who could look into the carriage from an elevation; and a more disagreeable, repulsive looking object, it was scarcely possible to have imagined.

She had long passed her youth;—and it was equally plain she had long passed her beauty. Her features were large; her skin coarse and dark; her figure vulgar, and extremely corpulent.

In brief, a more bloated, ill-looking, clumsy-shaped woman, all London could not have produced : nevertheless, this was Madame Kielmanssegge, the King's mistress.

"Down with the Hanoverian rats!" exclaimed one voice.

"Go back to your own beggarly country, you cursed old uglymug!" shouted a second.

"Arn't you ashamed, you unwholesome looking varmint, to be a King's conkyoubine, with such a precious ugly phiz as you've got!" cried a third.

"You abominable old sinner, you! The devil would have fetched you long afore this, if you hadn't made him so plaguy sick when he first cotched sight of you, he hasn't been able to recover himself!" screamed a fourth.

It may be gathered from these complimentary speeches, that the opinions of George I. and of his subjects differed very considerably in their estimates of female beauty. Madame Kielmanssegge, although she knew very little English, was perfectly satisfied that the addresses she had heard were not of the most flattering description. She felt a slight sense of alarm; but she pos-

sessed a degree of impudence worthy of her calling, and fancied she could easily persuade the shouting and groaning mob, that she was a much more amiable being than they supposed her to be.

She called her courage to her aid, and presented her face right before the open window of her chariot. Whether the full sight of such peculiar attractions in a King's mistress, or her apparent intention to address them, affected the multitude, cannot be satisfactorily ascertained ; but certain it is the general row subsided, and the rioters became silent. Now was the golden minute, she thought ; and she hastened to seize it.

"Goot beobles," she cried, in the most friendly manner that can be conceived. "Mine goot beobles, believe me, I come only for your goots!"

"Ay, and be d—d to you for a plundering old hussey!" cried a ready wit close to her carriage window. "We know you have come for our goods, and our chattels, too!"

This was the signal to renew the uproar, which recommenced with a shout of laughter ; and then came an endless number of epithets, execrations,

and admonitions, that would have made a pretty long lesson for her, had she attempted to get them by heart.

Madame Kielmansegge had sense enough to see that the King's subjects were not so easily gulled as the King. She cried to the coachman to drive as fast as he could, and threw herself back against the carriage. The coachman whipped his horses ; the footmen clung like wild-cats to their places ; shouts, groans, yells, dead cats, mud and rotten eggs, were hurled against the chariot in every direction ; and so many missiles might, at least have been more than enough for those who were outside, had not the skilful Jehu succeeded in making an opening in the mob, and dashed at full speed out of King Street into the wider thoroughfare of Whitehall.

He then soon left the noisy mob too far behind, to have the slightest anxiety for the safety of his mistress ; though it was evident, in the bespattered liveries of the servants, and mud-covered panels of the chariot, that they did not come out of the conflict unscathed.

All the while this hubbub was going on before her, the alarmed old lady in the sedan sat in a most uncomfortable state of anxiety. She was

fearful that the unruly mob would become troublesome to her ; and notwithstanding her handsome offers, she was not without considerable apprehension her Irish chairmen would allow their national inclinations to join in a row going on before them, to overpower their desire to possess what had been promised them on the condition of their keeping themselves quiet. The liberality of this reward, proved that the person who offered it, was either in a great fright, or had powerful reasons for desiring to remain undisturbed and unknown.

To do them justice Dan and Paddy kept their posts as quietly as the most trust-worthy sentinels could have done ; but, in the first place it should be known that the mob were too intent upon paying due honours to Madame Kielmansegge to heed the sedan or its inmate, and the next as soon as the Irishmen discovered there was no fighting going on, and all the rumpus was caused by a lot of people abusing one of the King's mistresses, they determined on doing their duty to "the queer ould soul" inside, with a fidelity worthy of the reward.

"Be the Piper that played before Moses, did you ever see the like of that, Dan ?" exclaimed

Paddy to his comrade. "To hear the rumpus one would have thought all the shelaleghs in Connaught were playing the devil's march to purgatory. But they haven't the sinse, honey ! to get up a dacent fight, or they wouldn't be howling at that ill-looking baste in the carritch."

"Oh, it's a poor lot they are, Paddy," said the other in great disdain. "Shouldn't we be disgraced entirely, and desarve it too, had we ventured among such wake-spirited spalpeens. Bear a hand, jewel, now they've passed us, we'll 'arn the goulden guineas asily. I wouldn't give a pinch of salt for these English ; I'd bate 'em by handfulls, I would."

The mob had gone by, and the way appeared clear ; so the bearers took up the chair again much to the satisfaction of the old lady within, and receiving a brief direction from her, hastened from the door-step with the quick springy step peculiar to this class of people, and did not stop till they got close to Westminster Abbey. Here they put down the chair, and the lady got out, and bidding them take the chair away, and be back by a certain time, she walked towards the great door. No one was near enough to observe her, and she entered the sacred building. She could see a few

persons passing on before ; but instead of following them to where the service was going on, she turned sharply to the right, where there was a door in an archway, which being in shadow, might readily be passed unregarded by those who knew not its existence. She pushed the door, which was slightly open, and entering, closed it quietly and carefully.

After passing along a dim passage she came to a chamber, that had much the appearance of a buttery, or place connected with a kitchen. Here she went up two or three steps, and by another door found her way into a longer passage, in which were several doors. Of these she took no notice ; but as if she knew the place thoroughly, went on till she came to a handsome flight of stairs, that led to a green baized door. She opened it and went in—opened another door close to it, found herself in a handsome apartment covered with books, in which the Bishop of Rochester was seated at a table, his gouty leg supported on a stool, reading a large folio volume. She took off her mask as she entered, and disclosed the features of the Duchess of Marlborough.

The Bishop evidently expected her, for he exhibited no surprise at her appearance. He looked

a little more serious than usual, and appeared as though he had but lately left his bed-room, for he was in his dressing-gown and night-cap ; a kind of dress that made him look a much less reverend personage, than when he wore his wig and clerical suit.

Her Grace entered, flushed either with excitement or exertion, and at once made for a chair close to the Bishop. She glanced at his uncanonical appearance, which seemed to shock her sense of propriety very much ; and in her usual stiff and stately manner strode to a seat.

His Lordship put on a cheerful air on beholding her, and welcomed her in a manner half jocose, half gallant ; but the solemn old lady was in no humour either for pleasantry or gallantry ; and gravely acquainted him with her meeting the mob who were assailing “one of the foreign women ;” and her fear of being discovered by some of the numerous spies she knew to be always watching her wherever she went. She drew a vivid picture of her alarm whilst the disturbance was going on before her, yet did not conceal the gratification she felt at the treatment “the good-for-nothing wretch” was receiving at the hands of an indignant people.

The Bishop expressed his concern for her Grace's sufferings : but at the description of the abuse lavished on the King's mistress by the mob, he burst out into expressions of the highest satisfaction, mingled with undisguised mirth.

"A good sign—an excellent beginning. Nothing could be more encouraging to our cause!" he exclaimed.

"What do you call *our* cause, my Lord?" inquired the Duchess, with a look full of reserve.

"Why what cause could be ours, but the cause of truth and legitimacy?" replied the Bishop. "The cause of religion and honour, of virtue and worth—the cause of our amiable Prince driven from the throne of his ancestors, who is eager to maintain his rights, that he may be able to support the good and reward the deserving; in opposition to the cause of an alien, who, through the influence of an unprincipled faction, has usurped a crown he has disgraced; who supports only a pack of the most worthless of both sexes, who have left their own country to plunder this; and rewards only those who appear to be lost to all sense of honesty and self-respect."

The Duchess of Marlborough took snuff.

"I have had many opportunities of hearing

the virtues that so gloriously adorn a person over the water," resumed the prelate. "I have heard of his generosity, his respect for religion, and his integrity of character. I have had quite as many opportunities of hearing the vices of his rival, of seeing the insulting neglect with which he treats the most distinguished personages in the kingdom; and the shameless manner in which he outrages common decency in his habitual disregard of all the respectable usages of society."

"You will please to remember, Bishop Atterbury," said the Duchess in her gravest tone of voice, and fixing her keen eyes upon his, "that his Grace the Duke of Marlborough is a subject of George I. King of England, and that I am his wife, and a subject of the same monarch."

The Bishop opened his eyes a little more than usual, as though wondering what was meant by such a speech, after the confidential communications that had passed between them, and the understanding he knew existed between "the person over the water" and the Duke of Marlborough.

"It is quite true, my Lord," she resumed, "that his Grace has the misfortune of seeing himself obliged to retire into the privacy of

country life, from not being so highly esteemed by his sovereign as his country, grateful for his eminent services, consider he deserves to be. But the Duke of Marlborough can afford to rest satisfied with the voice of all Europe. It can be of little importance to him who are greatest at Court, or by how many fools and knaves its rewards are monopolised."

"Yes," said the prelate, a little mystified by these remarks. "The Duke of Marlborough is unquestionably the greatest hero of ancient and modern times;—the most skilful, the bravest, and the most successful; and the man above all others who has a claim upon the favours of the throne, of which he has long been so able a champion; and, were it filled by a monarch possessed of an hereditary right to dispense its honours and rewards, and capable of duly estimating the Duke's unparalleled public services, I have every reason to believe—nay, I can take upon myself to say, that instead of his Grace being obliged to shut himself up at Woodstock, where he is like to remain unthought of and uncared for, he would stand at the right hand of his sovereign, the first in counsel as the first in war; and every distinction, every gift his Majesty would have the power to bestow,

would be lavished upon him with a prodigality that must exceed his most sanguine anticipations."

The Duchess of Marlborough again took snuff.

"It is not only in England," continued the prelate, "that the shameful manner in which the great Duke has been treated has excited indignation. The nations who witnessed his glorious career, can scarcely believe that so great a man as the conqueror of Blenheim, could submit to the humiliations that have been forced upon him."

"No, my Lord Bishop," said her Grace haughtily; "it is quite impossible that so illustrious a character as the Duke of Marlborough could be humiliated. Attempts may be made to put affronts upon him; but he knows his own high position too well to heed them."

"Just so," observed the Bishop; "but such affronts are not the less disgraceful for the magnanimity of the person against whom they are directed. At least, such I am aware is the feeling in the most renowned Court in Europe; and to such an extent does it influence a person over the water, that I can say with some confidence, that there is nothing the Duke could ask when that person is in a position to grant what his

friends may require of him, that there would be the slightest hesitation in his bestowing."

The Duchess of Marlborough was perfectly aware of what every word uttered by the Bishop meant, and had ventured at considerable risk to fulfil the appointment she had entered into for the express purpose of hearing the overtures that were to be made to her husband to join an extensive conspiracy, that had been organizing since the accession of George I., to assist the Pretender to invade the country and drive the Hanoverians out of it; but she was also aware that the Duke had received a great deal; and though he had no possible objection to receive a great deal more, she was not going to allow him to risk what he had got, unless it was quite clear that it would be extremely to his advantage in the end; and this she had the means of knowing was not to be looked for in the present conspiracy.

Her natural shrewdness, aided by her vast experience of Courts, had made her too skilful a diplomatist to commit herself or her husband in any way with the adherents of the Pretender. Notwithstanding the genuine disgust with which she regarded the disgraceful doings at St. James's, and

the equally genuine animosity she felt for every one connected with the Court who had been instrumental in depriving the Duke of the numerous valuable appointments he had held before her quarrel with Queen Anne on finding herself supplanted by Mrs. Masham ; the Duchess feigned as perfect an indifference to the fair promises contained in the speeches of her companion, as if she did not understand a word of what had been said.

Her object was to learn whether anything new had transpired respecting the projected rebellion, that she might possess as accurate a knowledge as possible of the intentions of the son of King James, and the resources of himself and his friends, to allow her to form a correct judgment of their prospect of success. And this object she presently attempted to gain by some skilful manœuvres that brought the unsuspecting prelate gradually to unfold the whole conspiracy before her, with all its means, agents, plans, and proceedings.

To gain so powerful an adherent as the Duke of Marlborough, was worth, the Bishop thought, a good deal of risk ; and as the Duchess appeared more interested the more she learned of his important secrets, he proceeded with increased con-

fidence to place before her his correspondence, to explain the cypher, and to give her the fullest information respecting every person who had joined the conspirators, or were about to join them.

Nothing could exceed the care with which the Duchess endeavoured to make herself mistress of such a business in all its details ; she gave an earnestness to her attention that much gratified her companion, and he did not scruple to answer her questions when he found her so deeply interested in the intelligence he laid before her.

The Duchess at last got from him all she wanted to know. There were no more questions to ask, there were no more answers to give. Her great penetration enabled her to see the exact character, and form an estimate of the true value of all the plans and promises, and expectations, her companion had detailed to her ; and her line of conduct was very soon decided on.

The Duchess of Marlborough took snuff once more ; and opened her box, extracted the powder and applied it to her nostrils with more than ordinary deliberation. There was a pause. The Bishop expected his visitor to speak, but his visi-

tor seemed in no hurry to do so. She sat with her sharp eyes fixed upon his with an expression he could not quite understand, and he did not at all like.

"Well what does your Grace think of our affairs?" at last inquired the prelate.

"Very badly, Bishop Atterbury," replied the lady, as coolly as possible.

"Why, God bless my soul, Madam, you astonish me!" cried the Bishop, expressing a surprise he was not without feeling. "The cause wears the most favourable aspect; its supporters are numerous and powerful; a decisive movement is about to take place which cannot fail of success."

"Indeed!" observed the Duchess in a tone of incredulity that grated terribly on the right reverend gentleman's ears.

"Surely, under such circumstances," added he, and not without an anxiety he could not conceal, "surely we may count on such important additions to our ranks as the Duke and yourself?"

"The Duke of Marlborough would be a great fool were he to think of joining you," replied the lady very quietly; and added in a more impressive manner, "and I should be a greater fool were I to let him."

"Why d—— it madam, I havn't been betraying the Prince's secrets to a spy?" exclaimed the Bishop, starting up in a rage, and looking very red in the face; for unhappily the worthy Bishop not only could throw himself into a passion, could look very red in the face, but could at such moments rap out an oath, which was still more uncanonical.

"No, Bishop Atterbury, you havn't been doing anything of the kind," answered the Duchess without moving a muscle of her countenance, "I came here for a very different purpose than to play the part of a spy; though I must say, my Lord, that you make a bad conspirator, as I much fear you will yourself discover some of these days."

"Pray what the devil did you come for?" inquired the prelate in what was decidedly a fierce tone and expression.

"I came, Bishop Atterbury," drily answered the old lady, leaning forward over the table and gazing on him steadily, "to warn you that Sir Robert Walpole is in possession of all the most important features of the conspiracy in which you are engaged."

The poor Bishop at this intelligence fell back on his chair as if he had been shot, and his counte-

nance suddenly became as pale as it had formerly been rubicund.

The Duchess continued her gaze, but without betraying a particle of sympathy.

At this moment both were startled by a loud knocking at the door. In the excited state of mind in which the Bishop then was, the disturbance could seem nothing but a summons to surrender himself into the custody of the Lieutenant of the Tower; and he made a desperate grasp at the papers on the table which were such indisputable evidence against him. The Duchess was not without apprehension, but her anxiety was far less violent than that of her companion.

The knocking was repeated more loudly, accompanied by some one calling on the Bishop. On recognizing the voice, the good prelate took a long breath, and hurriedly saying there was nothing to fear, and that he must leave her for a few minutes, he shuffled towards a door opposite to that by which the Duchess had entered, opened it, and disappeared, closing the door after him.

The Duchess of Marlborough was somewhat surprised at this mysterious movement; and not being able to explain it to her satisfaction, was debating in her mind whether it would not

be most prudent for her to take advantage of the opportunity and make her escape ; but before she could bring herself to act upon such a suggestion, the door again opened, and Bishop Atterbury made his appearance, looking more excited than ever.

“The most extraordinary thing has happened,” said he as he approached the table “but I wonder very much how it was, I never before heard of such an intention. A plan has been on foot some time to assassinate the Elector of Hanover, and the person who has taken this perilous task upon himself, every day takes the sacrament from a non-juring priest, the better to strengthen his resolution, as he considers it, to destroy a tyrant who is a disgrace to the land he misgoverns. This is a wonderful proof of the public animosity. A sovereign exciting so powerful a feeling must not expect to stand against it.”

“Very true, my Lord,” replied her Grace, having recourse to her snuff, in her usual methodical manner. “But you do not appear to be aware, Bishop Atterbury, that the intended assassin has this morning been taken into custody, and will be hanged as assuredly as he has a head on his shoulders.”

“That is quite unknown to me!” exclaimed the Bishop, apparently astounded by the extent of his companion’s information.

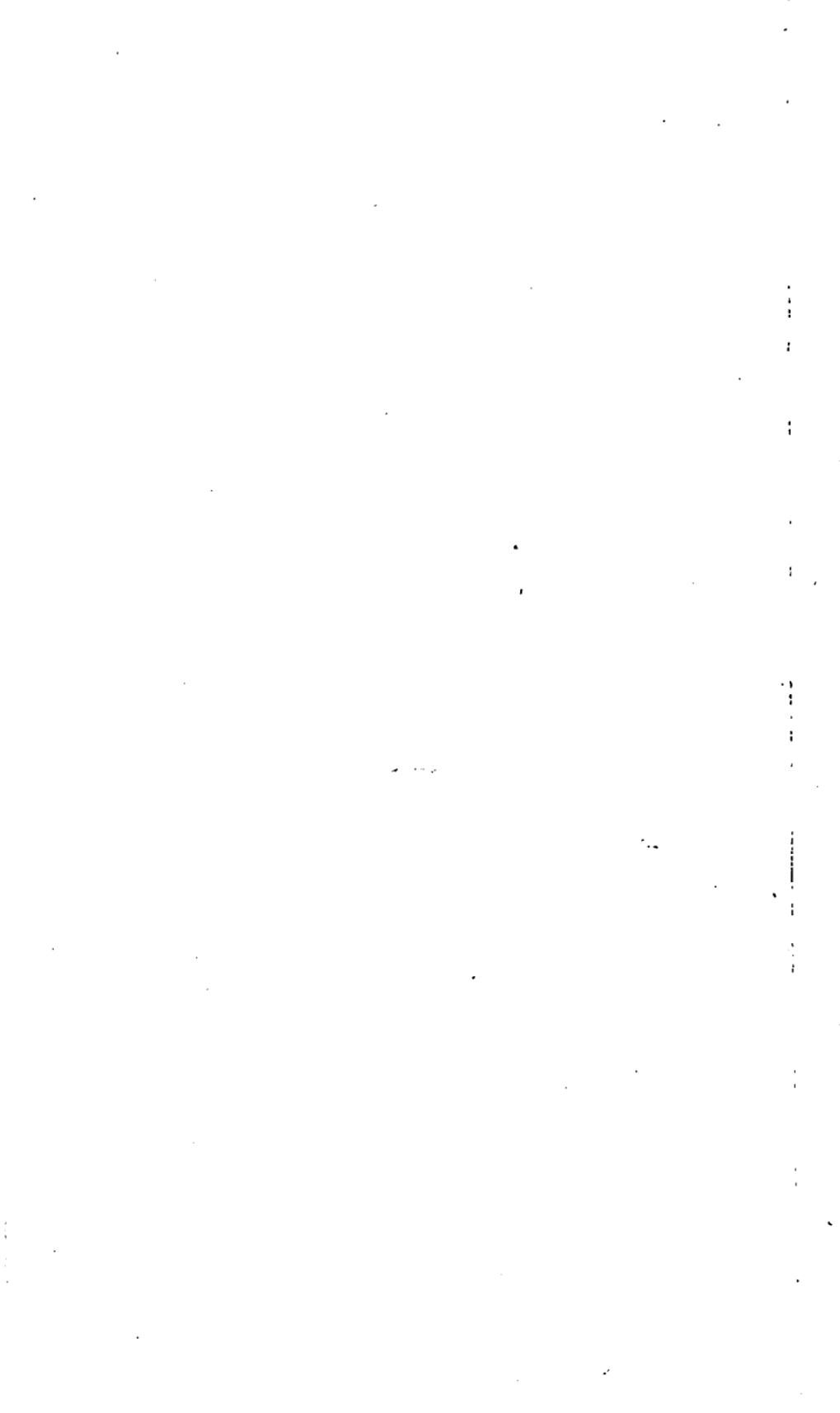
“I cannot, with safety to myself, prolong this interview,” said the stately old lady rising from her seat. “I came to warn you. The Government are in considerable peril, but are well aware of it. Most of the conspirators are known. I recommend you strongly to be prudent; for be assured that you are in no slight danger. What you have told me is quite safe with me; but you cannot be too cautious in making such confidences. Good day, my Lord Bishop.”

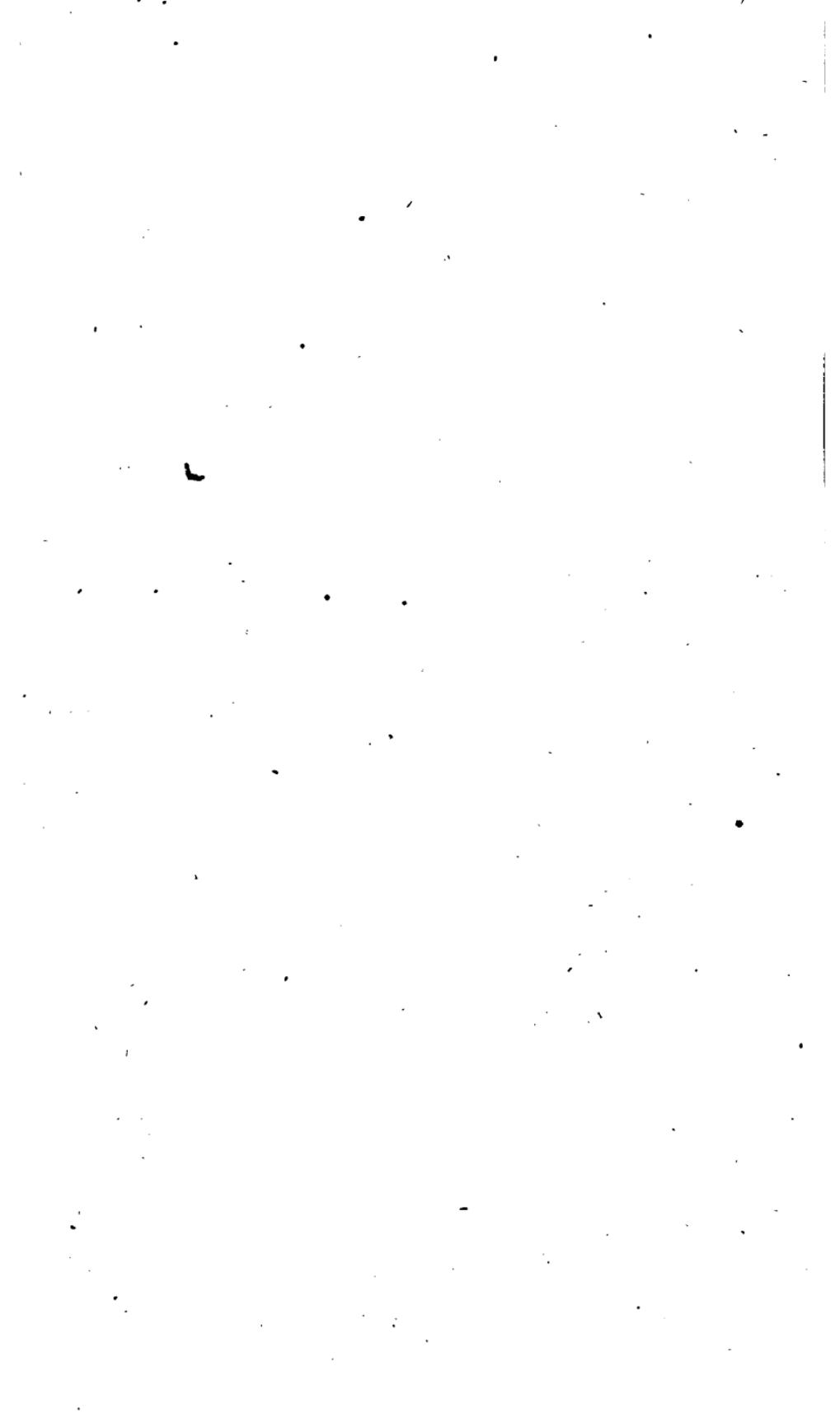
And without another word, the Duchess glided out of the apartment, leaving the worthy prelate as completely bewildered by the startling news she had announced to him, as any Bishop ever was in his life.

END OF VOL. I.

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